

RE: Medication & Immunizations in Young Children

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Many parents have questions regarding why I choose not to administer medication, exclude children that are taking over-the-counter (OTC) medications, have just started a new regimen of antibiotics or recently received vaccinations. I have drafted this letter to explain my position.

Many parents use OTC medications for fevers, pain, colds, and coughs. The medication reduces and hides the symptoms of illness but does not cure the illness itself. As a child care provider, I need to be able to monitor a child's health and body temperature as it is the body's way of telling us it is sick and giving a child OTC medication which hides the symptoms which I should be looking out for puts the child, the other children and me at risk. Also many times when an OTC medication is given, it's unnecessary and in the case of young children (particularly under the age of 5 years) the effect of these medications sometimes produces side effects instead of relief to symptoms. OTC medications should only be given if a child has significant discomfort. So for me I take the stance that if a child is in such discomfort or pain that he/she needs to take OTC medication then that child is not well enough to attend daycare and needs to remain at home where the child can rest most comfortably. This is true even with teething children. Don't worry; I have other methods to relieve discomfort from teething that do not require any type of medication, gel or teething tablets. I am also required to follow specific child care licensing regulations when it comes to administering medications which I

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports the public health advisory put out by the US Food and Drug Administration which recommends that OTC medications should not be used at all for infants and children under the age of 2 because of the risk of possible life threatening side effects. Many of these medicines contain acetaminophen which can cause illness or liver failure if the wrong dosage is given or if given too frequently. It is recommended that parents discuss the use of OTC medications with their health care provider before giving any medications to their child. I am also required to follow specific child care licensing regulations when it comes to administering medications which I believe are too strenuous. The administration of medication also carries more risk of liability and I would therefore need a large increase of liability insurance. For all of the reasons above I choose to not administer medications and exclude children currently taking OTC medication from daycare.

Use of Nonprescription Medications for Common Symptoms:

- Medications should only be given for symptoms that cause significant discomfort, such as repeated coughing or difficulty with sleeping but always only after consulting with your health care provider. If your child is sleeping or playing normally, OTC medications are typically not needed.
- Viral illnesses respond well to rest, fluids and comfort measures.
- If your child is given any type of OTC medication then your child must remain at home and can return 24 hours after the last dosage was given if the child has no other symptoms for exclusion. If your child requires OTC medication then your child is not well enough to attend daycare.

When a child is put on a new regimen of antibiotics I require that the child stay home for the first 24 hours minimum then the child can return to daycare as long as the child does not exhibit any symptoms for exclusion (fever, rash, diarrhea etc). I do this for two reasons. One, it takes approximately that long for the antibiotic to take full effect and to render the bacteria non-contagious. Two, some children may get side effects such as fever, a rash or

diarrhea. Some children may even have a severe reaction to the antibiotic. It is in everyone's best interest if children on a new prescription of antibiotics stay at home for the first 24 hours. I will not administer antibiotics at daycare for some of the same reasons as to why I do not administer OTC medications.

Like with antibiotics, immunizations carry a risk of possible severe side effects or reactions. Often times children will get a fever, a rash or diarrhea. Another possibility is that for a short time the child's immune system is compromised because it is busy focusing on producing the antibodies to provide immunity against the disease in the vaccine and it is easier for the child to become ill. It is then impossible for me to know when a child shows symptoms for exclusion if they are from the vaccine or if the child is actually ill. I have chosen to take the position of assuming that all children exhibiting symptoms are sick rather than possibly exposing the other children to illness.

I have personal experience of this with one of my own children. One day after having one of my son's vaccinated he developed a fever and a small rash. Both my husband and I chalked it up as symptoms to the vaccines. His fever spiked and the rash got worse and spread to his face. We took him in to see his pediatrician and it turned out to be Roseola, presumably from his weakened immune system. Had I not followed my own policy I could have exposed the other children in my daycare during my son's outbreak.

#### Immunizations

- Because of possible reactions to immunizations if your child receives immunizations (including flu shots) a 48 hour exemption from daycare is required.
- Please schedule all immunizations on Friday afternoons so that the exemption period can pass during the weekend (or schedule them on a day when your child is not scheduled for the next two days) so that you will only need to take a minimal amount of time off of work.

Please notify me whenever your child is on any type of medication or when they have had immunizations so that I can be mindful of any possible side effects and can update your child's immunization record. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Marina V. Valenzuela  
Helping Hands Childcare