



Section Five

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE PLAYGROUPS

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Safe Playgroups

Creating a safe playgroup

Even if we give our playgroup-aged children loving care and close supervision we cannot always keep them from harm.

Children can still trip, fall, bleed, bruise, get scratched, cut, burnt or bitten.

But whether your playgroup is in a home or a public facility, you have a responsibility to provide a safe, healthy environment for children. It is the child's right to be supervised at all times.

We can take positive action to lessen the chances of or prevent the likelihood of serious injuries occurring.

How many families make a safe playgroup?

For home playgroups Playgroup South Australia recommends 6-8 families and 10-15 families for hall playgroups. Overcrowding can increase the risk of an accident occurring. Consider the size of your meeting place and how many families are comfortable indoors on a wet day.

Children's Services Regulations recommend 3.3 square metres per child for an indoor play space. Playgroups are not bound by these regulations but are wise to use them as a guide.

Decide, as a group, on a safe number of enrolled families for your playgroup. Take into account the size of the venue, ages of the children and number of families with more than one child attending.

If you feel your playgroup is getting too large to be safe:

- start a new playgroup session
- make a waiting list, or
- refer families to other local playgroups.

Sharing the responsibility

Each parent and caregiver attending a playgroup must be responsible for the welfare and safety of the child/ren they bring. There is also a group responsibility to ensure every child is safe.

Keeping this in mind, remember that playgroups need to keep a balance between being safe and allowing the children to take the risks necessary to develop new skills.

Develop a playgroup safety policy

Involve everyone in making decisions about safety issues and then incorporate them into a safety policy. Display your policy and make new playgroup members aware of it.

Writing a safety policy

1. Begin with a strong statement defining safety and outlining your playgroup's commitment to safety. Define who is responsible for safety regarding:
 - supervision of children
 - toys and equipment
 - children going to the toilet
 - fences, gates and doors
 - the playground and fixed equipment
 - car parking and transporting children
 - other issues related to play activities.
2. List playgroup guidelines regarding:
 - infectious diseases
 - being SunSmart
 - smoking
 - kitchen issues and hot drinks
 - other issues specific to your venue.
3. Include emergency evacuation procedures in cases of fire or trauma. See 'Standard fire orders for playgroups' later in this section.
4. State where the following are kept and who is responsible for:
 - emergency numbers for fire
 - enrolment forms with personal details should anyone be injured or traumatised
 - First Aid Kit
 - accident, incident and injury book.
5. Define how members can raise and report safety concerns and how these concerns will be handled.

A safety policy is a living document. Regularly revise and update it to ensure your practices are consistent with your policy.

Hunt for Hazards

Hazards

Drowning

- Pool, pond, river, dam
- Bath, toilet, bucket, unsupervised water play equipment
- Gully trap containing water or liquids

Children can drown in as little as five centimetres of water.

Falls

- Hole, well or trench over one metre deep
- Stairway, fence, tree, ladder, play equipment or furniture over 1.5 metres
- Rocks, concrete or hard surface within one metre of play equipment
- Uneven or cracked concrete pathways

Burns and scalds

- Unguarded heaters or open fireplaces
- Flammable liquids, matches or lighters
- Cooking appliances within reach
- Hot water or cups of tea or coffee
- Cigarettes
- Hot water taps – reduce the temperature of hot water
- Barbecues

Traffic accidents

- Unfenced outdoor areas
- Car parks
- Doors to streets and/or car parks left open by members or visitors

Electrocution

- Electrical power points not protected by child-proof covers
- Cords and appliances within reach of children

Suffocation

- Plastic bags
- Refrigerators, cupboards

Poisoning

Poisons Hotline 13 11 26

- Medications or other dangerous substances left within child's reach or in handbags
- Cigarette butts in ashtrays
- Mouse or insect poisons/sprays
- Garden, household, garage products
- Toxic paints, glues, crayons, markers
- Poisonous plants
- Disinfectants, washing liquids (including those used for bubble mixture)

Choking

- Objects smaller than 32mm x 32mm eg crayons, small toy parts, small objects found in handbags left within reach of children
- Polystyrene (including polystyrene beads), which, if inhaled or ingested, are not detectable on X-ray
- Drawing pins, small coins
- Deflated balloons or balloon pieces
- Animal bites and stings, including pets, spiders, snakes, wasps and bees

Cuts and crushes

- Non-safety low glass in doors or windows
- Hooks, scissors, splinters, nails, hypodermic needles
- Knives, glass bottles, tools
- Broken toys or equipment, sharp table corners
- Unstable appliances, furniture, equipment that could fall or has hinges
- Doors, windows or gates left open by caregivers or parents that could slam shut
- Unprotected joints and hinges
- Chairs, tables or other furniture stacked against a wall
- Broken or inappropriate furniture stored in the play room

Entrapment

- Cords longer than 30cm, rope, clotheslines, decorative ribbon
- Furniture, toys or play equipment that could entrap a child's fingers, head or limb

The most common hazards at playgroup are adult handbags containing small coins, medications, etc and doors left open by parents, carers or visitors.

Control Hazards

Hazard control

Always make it part of your regular routine to check all indoor and outdoor play areas for possible hazards. This is particularly necessary when other groups share the playgroup room. If you find a hazard then remove, repair, replace and/or restrict access to it.

Playgroup SA have provided a WHS Inspection Checklist for the purpose of eliminating hazards at the end of this Guide, in the Forms section.

Minimise the risks

If hazards cannot be removed, erect barriers to protect children. Use fences, gates, guards, doors, covers, locks, child restraints, containers and cupboards.

Keep dangerous objects at least 1.5m above floor level and remove anything children could use to climb to that height. Latches on gates and doors should be more than 1.5m high. Gates should be self closing and self locking. Place a 'Hold My Hand' sign on the inside of the gate.

Be prepared

Have phone access

Display your emergency action plan and emergency phone numbers in a prominent position. See 'Emergency Action' and 'Checklist' later in this section. Regularly check that the information is up to date.

If a phone is not available at the playgroup venue arrange for a member to carry their mobile phone or make arrangements with nearby residents.

Plan emergency transport

Plan ahead in regard to how you would transport an adult or child in an emergency situation.

Keep numbers manageable

Ask families to sign in and out of the Attendance Book so that it can be referred to in the event of an emergency

Avoid overcrowding as it can cause confusion in an emergency.

Have a First Aid kit

Be sure to have a playgroup First Aid Kit available and regularly replace used and expired items.

Suitable kits can be purchased from St John Ambulance or Kidsafe. See 'Safety Resources' and 'Recommended contents for a general First Aid Kit' later in this section.

Consider having first aid charts displayed and at least one person within the group who is trained to handle emergencies.

Playgroup SA also run Accredited Senior First Aid and Emergency CPR training sessions with First Care Medical.

Have a fire evacuation plan

Use the standard fire orders for playgroups (discussed later) to write an Emergency Action Plan for your playgroup. Display the plan and regularly practise the fire drill.

Know where all fire extinguishers are and be sure that everyone knows how to use them. Check that emergency exits are clearly labelled and not blocked.

External fires

If you are in a high bushfire danger area, formulate a policy regarding cancelling the playgroup on high fire danger days.

Record

Have a book available to record any incidents or injuries while they are fresh in members' minds. If an insurance claim eventuates this information is very important.

When recording an incident include date, time, place, people present, action taken and signatures. Two adults should complete a signed, eye-witness account wherever possible. See 'Accident, incident or injury record'.

Injury Information

Emergency Action for Playgroups

St John Ambulance has developed a training operation that follows the sequence D.R.A.B.C.

Dangers

Protect yourself and others from any further danger.

Responsive

Check to see if the person is conscious and able to respond.

Send for Help

Call the emergency services (or if possible, get someone else to do so while you tend to the person).

Airways (Open Airways?)

If the person is unconscious check that their airways are not blocked. Place the person on their side and tilt the head back and slightly down. Open their mouth and remove any blockages.

Breathing (Normal Breathing?)

If the person is not breathing apply mouth to mouth resuscitation. Place the person on their back. Tilt their head back, supporting jaw. Blow with nose pinched until chest rises. Babies: puff into mouth and nose. Give five mouth to mouth breaths.

CPR

If the person is not breathing, check for a heartbeat (pulse). If there is no pulse give CPR. If unwilling or unable to perform rescue breaths, continue chest compressions.

30 Compressions: 2 Breaths

Continue CPR until responsiveness/normal breathing returns or paramedic arrives.

Consider having someone at your playgroup trained in First Aid!

Information above sourced from Australian Resuscitation Council - www.resus.org.au

Flowcharts and further information available on their website also.

First Aid for common playgroup injuries

Bee sting

When bees sting they usually leave behind a tiny venom sack. Remove this by scraping it sideways with a fingernail or the side of a knife. Wipe the area clean. Apply a cold compress. Watch for signs of allergic reactions.

European wasp sting

Wash the sting area clean. Apply cold compress. If there are signs of allergic reaction seek medical help urgently.

Bites

For life threatening bites from venomous snakes or funnel web spiders apply a pressure immobilisation bandage over the bitten area and around the limb. Seek urgent medical attention.

Choking

If you can see the object, hook it out with your fingers using a finger-sweep motion across the roof of mouth, otherwise don't attempt.

Encourage the choker to breathe slowly and calmly and cough to remove the object.

If coughing is effective, it is a mild airway obstruction and encouragement of coughing should continue, as should constant checking of patient until recovery or arrival of paramedic.

If conscious and coughing is ineffective, give up to five back blows and, if not effective, then proceed to give up to five chest thrusts and call ambulance if required.

If unconscious, call ambulance and commence CPR until they arrive.

Injury Information

Bleeding

Apply direct pressure.

Open wounds

Control bleeding with a clean dressing pad, clean the wound, apply a sterile dressing.

Abrasions

Clean the abrasion with sterile gauze soaked in cool boiled water or wash under running tap water. Apply antiseptic according to directions on the label. Gently apply a non-stick dressing.

Burns

Apply cold water for 10 minutes (preferably under a running tap). Apply sterile non-stick dressing.

DO NOT apply ice.

Shock

Lie the person down and protect from cold. Elevate their legs slightly when possible.

Fractures

Immobilise the injured part. Seek medical help as soon as possible.

First Aid advice for poisoning

Poisons Information Centre 13 11 26

Poison swallowed

Pick up container and any residue and take to phone.

Call Poisons Information Centre and follow advice.

Poison in eye

Flood the eye with water poured from a cup held two to three centimetres from the eye and repeat for 10 to 15 minutes.

Call the Poisons Information Centre and follow advice.

Poison inhaled

Immediately get the person to fresh air, open doors and windows.

Call the Poisons Information Centre and follow advice.

Poison on skin

Remove contaminated clothing and flood skin with water. Wash gently with soap and water, rinse.

Call the Poisons Information Centre and follow advice.

To call the Poisons Information Centre in an emergency

- Call 13 11 26.
- State the name of the poison and amount taken.
- State when swallowed or contacted.
- State person's age and condition.
- Follow the advice given.

If the victim has collapsed, stopped breathing, is fitting or is suffering an anaphylactic reaction, ring 000 for an ambulance. Do NOT ring the Poisons Information Centre.

First Aid Kit and Standard Fire Orders

Recommended contents for a general First Aid Kit

- 1 x 50 pack adhesive dressing strips
- 2 x triangular bandages
- 1 x small conforming elastic bandage (5cm wide)
- 1 x medium conforming elastic bandage (7.5cm wide)
- 2 x medium crepe bandage (7.5cm wide)
- 2 x eye pads
- 2 x small wound dressing (no.13)
- 2 x medium wound dressing (no.14)
- 2 x medium combine dressing pads (9 x 20cm)
- 2 x large combine dressing pads (20 x 20cm)
- 3 x medium gauze dressing (7.5 x 7.5cm)
- 2 x small Melolin dressing (5 x 5cm)
- Adhesive tape (2.5cm wide – preferably Micropore)
- 4 x Sterowipes (alcohol swabs) or iodine sachets
- 4 x saline Steritubes (minimum 10ml)
- 1 x sterile eyewash bottle
- 1 x pair scissors
- 1 x pair tweezers
- 1 x 12 pack safety pins
- 2 x pairs disposable gloves (medium and large)
- 1 x resuscitation mask or face shield
- 3 Individually wrapped hand towels
- 3 Plastic bags (150mm x 200mm)
- 1 Thermometer
- 1 Insect repellent
- 1 Sunscreen
- First Aid booklet
- Note pad and pencil.

Standard fire orders for playgroups

Upon discovery of a fire

1. Assist anyone in immediate danger, if safe to do so.
2. Group coordinators and assistants to check all areas including toilets, storerooms, kitchen and close doors after check. Ensure all children are accounted for. Retrieve attendance book if safe to do so.
3. Ring Fire Brigade on 000 and alert other building users.
4. Evacuate to designated assembly area.
5. Remain at assembly area and ensure all are accounted for using attendance book. Do not return to the building until an all clear for your return has been given.

Bushfire

Playgroup SA suggests that playgroups in bushfire risk areas:

- become familiar with CFS bushfire preparedness and survival guidelines
- become familiar with CFS scale of fire danger ratings
- develop a plan of action according to CFS guidelines that includes:
 - a clear statement as to the level of fire danger at which time playgroup will be cancelled
 - encouragement for playgroup members to have a personal bushfire survival plan
 - a clear statement that informs playgroup members to act responsibly during danger periods and stay away from playgroup if they believe the risk is too great
 - advice to remain alert and informed of weather conditions in your area.

It is also important that playgroups have a clear understanding of venue owner's emergency plans. It is important that all families know where emergency equipment is stored and that the equipment is periodically checked and in good working order.

SA Country Fire Service (CFS) Bushline Info Hotline
1300 362 361

Emergency Action

Emergency numbers

The closest phone for playgroup use is located:

Ambulance Phone:

Fire station Phone:

Poisons Information Centre Phone:

Police Phone:

Hospital Phone:

Local doctor Phone:.....

Our First Aid Kit is kept:

Our accident book is kept:

Parent emergency phone numbers are kept:

To call an ambulance

Ensure there is someone to stay with the patient at all times; a second person should phone for help.

- Call the local ambulance on 000.
- Give the exact location.
- State the number of casualties.
- State the severity of the injury or illness.
- Do not hang up until the operator has confirmed they have all the necessary information, ie never hang up first.

Keep this information on display near the phone

- Playgroup address
- Nearest intersecting street
- Playgroup contact number

Safety Resources

References and Resources

Community Health Centres

See phone listing under 'Business listings' in White Pages or visit www.whitepages.com.au.

The Department of Education Childhood Development (DECD)

For Children's Services Regulations visit www.decd.sa.gov.au/childrensservices/pages/earlychildhood/standards

Kidsafe Resources

Kidsafe, Child Injury Prevention & Child Safety in SA
www.kidsafesa.com.au

Telephone Advisory Service 8161 6318

- Information sheets
- News & Media Room
- Safety Services
- Useful Websites and More Info

Child & Youth Health Centres

See phone listings under individual councils in White Pages phone book or visit Child & Youth Health website
www.cyh.com

Women's and Children's Health Network website

Formerly Children, Youth and Women's Health Service (CYWHS)
www.wchn.sa.gov.au

- The Women's and Children's Health Network is South Australia's leading provider of health services for children, young people and women. They work in partnership with our clients and their families, the community and other service providers to promote, maintain and restore health.

Staying Healthy in Childcare

National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Government
www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch43

- This publication aims to assist anyone caring for children, in home day care situations or within child care organisations, and healthcare professionals in controlling the spread of childhood infections.

Standards Australia

Call 1300 654 646 or visit www.standards.org.au for Australian safety standards.

St John Ambulance Australia (SA)

Call 1300 360 455 or visit www.stjohnsa.com.au for First Aid training and supplies

Road Safety

Call 1300 360 745 or visit www.sa.gov.au/topics/transport-travel-and-motoring/road-safety

- Child restraint and road safety information.

Department of Health

For health information contact Health Direct on 1800 022 222 or visit www.sahealth.gov.au

Department of Human Services

Toll Free 1300 554 479
www.humanservices.gov.au

Playground Safety

The major cause of playground injury is falling from play equipment onto hard surfaces.

Good planning and layout

The internal layout of a playground should prevent conflict between:

- moving equipment eg swings and passing children
- traffic from a slide or tunnel into the path of other activities
- quiet play and boisterous activities in a confined area such as a sandpit
- high energy active play and toddlers just learning to walk.

Soft fall under surfacing

The potential for injury from a fall is greater if there is no impact absorbing material under and around equipment. Tested impact absorbing material is required for all fall heights above 500mm.

Where there is a fall height above 500mm there should be:

- 200mm loose material
- plus 50mm for deterioration
- plus 20% for traffic (ie under a swing or at the foot of a slide)
- 300mm to be installed because it will settle to a depth of 250mm.

All purchasers of soft fall material should require the supplier to provide written evidence that the material and depth of material laid on the ground complies with Australian Standards. If material to be purchased has not been tested as per the Australian Standards, use 300 mm as a minimum depth. Grass or lawn is not soft fall material.

Adequate safe fall zone

Impact absorbing material should be provided underneath play equipment and must extend 2.5m beyond the outside edges of the equipment. With a swing, the fall zone must measure 2.5m from the extension of the swing. This area is called the safe fall zone.

Playground maintenance

It is essential that all playgrounds are regularly maintained. There should be no missing, broken or

worn components. All parts should be stable with no apparent sign of loosening. Impact absorbing materials should be regularly checked for depth and any signs of vandalism. A systematic inspection and maintenance plan should be in place to ensure that the playground is safe.

Supervision

Supervision by an adult is a key factor in playground safety. To make supervision easier and more comfortable, a play area should be designed to provide shade, seating and a clear view of the play area. Young children constantly challenge their own abilities, but are often unable to recognise potential hazards. In supervising play the parent or caregiver should make sure the child uses equipment appropriate for his or her age and size.

Have guardrails on platforms

Raised surfaces such as platforms, ramps and bridges should have guardrails, barriers or infill to prevent falls. It is important that rails and barriers are vertical so they cannot be used as footholds for climbing.

Eliminate trip hazards

Trip hazards are created by parts of playground equipment or items on the ground. Exposed concrete footings, abrupt changes in surface elevations, playground edging, tree roots, tree stumps and rocks are common trip hazards often found in the play environment. Exposed concrete footings pose a serious risk for injury if a child falls on them. They should be buried at least 200mm below ground level.

Have age appropriate activities

The developmental needs of children vary greatly. To provide a challenging but safe play environment it is important that the playground equipment is appropriate for the user's abilities. **CLOSE SUPERVISION IS ESSENTIAL.**

Avoid overcrowded play areas

Serious injuries can result from collisions if the play area is overcrowded. There should be at least 2.5m between each piece of play equipment and all paths, fences, trees, buildings, structures and other equipment. Active play areas should be separated from quiet, creative areas, for example. A slide should not propel children into a sandpit used for creative play.

Playground Safety

Remove potential entrapment

Equipment should be built and installed so that a child's head, neck, limbs or fingers cannot become trapped. Openings of less than 70mm wide can trap hands and limbs. Fingers can become trapped in openings and holes between 6mm and 25mm wide. Larger openings should be smaller than 125mm or wider than 230mm to avoid head entrapment.

Check for pinch points and sharp edges

Equipment should be checked regularly to ensure there are no sharp edges. Moving components such as suspension bridges, track rides, see-saws and swings should be regularly checked to make sure there are no moving parts or mechanisms that might crush or pinch a small finger.

Things that protrude or tangle

Protruding bolts and other pieces of hardware or components of equipment can cause bruises and cuts if a child bumps into them. These protrusions can also act as hooks that can catch a child's clothing and potentially cause strangulation if a child is caught by a hooded top. Ropes should be anchored securely at both ends so they cannot form a loop or noose.

Adapted from, 'How Many Hazards are hidden in Your Playground?' by the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria.

Fences

Playgroup SA recommends that fences or barriers be:

- installed to enclose any outdoor space that is used for children's play
- at least 1.5m high from ground level
- such that a child attending the playgroup cannot go through, over or under it.

Websites

Look for 'Safety' in the A-Z search tab of www.raisingchildren.net.au

www.kidsafesa.com.au

www.parksleisure.com.au

www.recSPORT.sa.gov.au

Infection Control

Common cold prevention measures

- Display reminder posters about regular hand washing for children and adults.
- Use tissues rather than handkerchiefs so nasal secretion can be disposed of quickly.
- Remind adults to wash hands after nose wiping.
- Encourage older children to wipe their own noses, dispose of the tissue and then wash their hands.
- Encourage older children and adults to cough into a tissue rather than their hand and turn away from food, children and adults.
- Wash mouthed toys that have been contaminated with nasal secretions.
- Keep rooms well ventilated to ensure fresh air is circulating.

Key principles of infection control

- Standard precautions (treating all children's body secretions and excretions as if they are potentially infectious).
- Effective hand washing, preferably using liquid soap and warm running water.
- Relationship between poor hand washing and spread of germs.
- Importance of regular cleaning routines using detergent and warm water.
- Use of disposable towels or single use cloths for wiping hands and faces.

Effective hand washing

- Use soap (preferably liquid soap) and warm running water.
- Rub your hands together vigorously as you wash them, counting to ten.
- Wash backs of hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails.
- Rinse hands well with running water, counting to ten.
- Pat hands dry with a single-use disposable paper towel, single-use cloth towel or hand dryer.

Washing babies' hands

Parents or caregivers can organise a routine for babies to wash hands at nappy changes. Babies love to do this.

Alternative to hand washing

When taps and sinks for hand washing are not available, use alcohol-based wipes or lotions to wipe hands, however, this is not as effective as hand washing. If hands are contaminated with faeces, hand washing with soap is essential and wipes should not be used.

Ensure that children are supervised when using such products and dispose of safely and immediately after use. Alcohol-based wipes may irritate some children with sensitive skin.

Healthy snack times, lunch routine

- Have a hand washing routine before eating.
- Have children bring their own food and drink.
- Set some guidelines around what is healthy and appropriate ie fruit, sandwiches, cheese.
- Avoid nuts, popcorn or other foods that could cause choking or allergic reactions.
- Supply children with individual bowls and cups.
- Ask children to sit down; a moving child can easily choke on food.
- Use tongs to place food in a child's bowl as an alternative to them choosing from a central plate of food.
- Thoroughly wash all dishes and dry with a clean tea towel.
- Store all utensils hygienically.
- Discard chipped or broken crockery.
- Regularly replace sponges, brushes and other dishwashing items.
- Have a system for cloths/sponges, eg yellow sponges for dishes, blue for table tops, green for toilets, pink for art and craft, etc and store in separate containers.
- Use paper towels to wipe floor spills.
- Empty the urn of old water before each playgroup session.
- Offer water or milk for drinking; avoid cordials.

Toys and equipment

To keep all play equipment safe and hygienic regularly wash and check toys and equipment, particularly when used by babies and toddlers who put such objects in their mouths.

Regularly wash soft toys, rugs, dress-ups and other play equipment. Be sure that soft toys dry thoroughly to prevent mould forming inside.

Infection Control

Play area

Regularly wash wet areas and vacuum carpets. Have a working bee if your play room and/or equipment is not adequately hygienic. Make arrangements with the owner of the building to freshly paint walls and remove or replace inappropriate curtains or drapes.

Have mouse or insect infestations dealt with immediately. Implement preventative measures.

Blood spills or excretion

- All spills of blood or other bodily fluids are potentially dangerous. Treat them seriously.
- Equipment for cleaning up spills may consist of a plastic bag, disinfectant (White King or Domestos), disposable gloves, paper towel, hot water and detergent.
- Wear protective gloves and saturate the paper towel in diluted disinfectant (1/3 cup to 2/3 cup water). Cover spill, leave for 10 minutes then transfer into a bag. Repeat procedure, then wash area with hot water and detergent. Discard gloves into plastic bag and wash hands.
- Remember gloves are not a total barrier against germs so hands still need to be washed carefully. Soiled gloves will still spread infection if they touch other objects.

Immunisation

Decisions about immunising a child are wholly the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

Playgroup SA supports the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia's recommendations that all children should be immunised, unless there is a clear medical reason why this should not occur.

In SA it is a mandatory regulation that immunisation status documentation be provided at the time of enrolment in a primary school only. Playgroups are not legislated.

If playgroups request the immunisation status of children on their enrolment form they need to state that giving the information is optional. Families are under no obligation to provide this information.

If this information is collected, privacy laws require you to state why it is being collected, who has access to this information, how it will be stored and how

it will be used. Be sure to appropriately destroy this information when the family leaves the playgroup.

Anti-discrimination laws clearly state that playgroups cannot exclude a family from joining their group on the grounds of a child's immunisation status.

An unborn child is at risk of severe defects if the mother contracts rubella (German Measles) in the early months of pregnancy. Women planning a pregnancy are encouraged to know their rubella status before becoming pregnant. If there is an outbreak of any disease at playgroup, inform pregnant women so they can see a doctor immediately.

Parents need to take precautions when taking very young babies to playgroup before the immunisation schedule begins.

Playgroups are about families working together for the safety and wellbeing of all parents, caregivers and children. Draw up guidelines outlining the procedures to follow should there be an outbreak of a communicable disease. Clearly state what the exclusion period is for the sick child and their siblings who may be in the incubation stage. On no account should an older sibling who is too sick to go to school be brought to playgroup.

Playgroup SA encourages playgroups to adopt policies that welcome and include all families.

For further information on immunisation contact the Department of Human Services.

For more on sick children

Information outlining the minimum period of exclusion from schools and children's service centres for infectious disease cases is available from the National Health and Medical Research Council and is detailed in the publication 'Staying Healthy - Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services' - www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch43

Smoking/SunSmart

Smoking

Playgroup SA has a strict No Smoking policy due to the proven dangers of passive smoking to small children and the toxicity of cigarette butts.

Many community venues including schools, churches and kindergartens have a No Smoking policy that playgroups are required to adopt when using their facilities, however, if carers choose to do so upon leaving playgroup, they should be mindful of:

- Doing so at least 10 metres away from children.
- Adequate supervision of children if parents or caregivers move away to smoke.
- Disposing of cigarette butts responsibly.
- Keeping children safe from burns.

SunSmart

Medical research suggests exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun during childhood significantly increases the risk of skin cancer later in life. Protecting the skin from the sun during childhood and adolescence could prevent 75% of all skin cancers.

Establishing SunSmart behaviour at playgroup helps reduce this long-term risk and develops SunSmart habits that can last a lifetime.

Recommended strategies

- Play outdoors in the early morning and late afternoon when UV radiation levels are lower.
- Limit outdoor play when UV radiation is most intense (10am–2pm and 11am–3pm during daylight savings time) and consider this when determining the time of day your playgroup meets.
- Set up play experiences for children in shady places and encourage children to play in areas like verandahs, under trees and portable sunshades. In the shade UV radiation is reflected from nearby surfaces such as concrete, so use clothing, a hat and sunscreen as well.
- Wear hats that protect the face, ears, eyes and neck such as broad brimmed (at least 7.5 cm brim for adults and children, 6cm for very young children) or legionnaire style hats with a flap at the back.
- Wear protective, loose clothing with

collars, longer sleeves and longer pants. Avoid sleeveless or strappy sun dresses and singlet tops. Closer weave fabrics are more protective. Fabric with an Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) rating of 40 or higher offers excellent protection.

- Apply SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen to exposed skin 20 minutes before going outdoors. Reapply at least every two hours. Many brands of sunscreen are formulated especially for infants and are less likely to cause allergic reactions. Sunscreen should be the last method of protection. It should never be used alone.

Visit www.sunsmart.com.au for up to date information including sun protection fact sheets, brochures, posters and translated resources.

Allergies

Be sensitive to any food or other allergies that children or adults may have. The playgroup may need to adjust its practices to help families with these matters. Be particularly vigilant at snack times.

Checklist

Photocopy this checklist and tick what is working well. Part of your playgroup's duty of care is to ensure that your playgroup is physically safe and emotionally secure.

- A phone or mobile phone is available at each playgroup session.
- Emergency numbers are kept by the phone or are easily accessible.
- A First Aid Kit is available.
- Emergency information about each child and adult is on their enrolment form.
- Emergency information is kept at playgroup and accessible in the event of an emergency (especially an emergency concerning an adult).
- Families know the emergency procedures and assembly point so as not to be in the way of emergency vehicles.
- Adult handbags are kept out of reach.
- Smoke detectors and batteries are checked regularly.
- Cords to urns and jugs are out of reach.
- Tea or coffee is prepared away from children.
- Power point covers are fitted.
- A fire blanket is kept in the kitchen.
- Kitchen barriers are in place at all times.
- Barriers to doorways, stairs and heaters are in place.
- Water play is strictly supervised.
- Toxic paint, toxic glue or toxic bubble mixture is not permitted at playgroup.
- Foods such as lollies, carrot, apple, peanuts, and popcorn are not given to babies or toddlers.
- Corner covers are in place over sharp furniture edges.
- Safety glass is installed in doors and windows.
- A childproof self-locking, self-latching gate is installed to prevent children from leaving the play area.
- Cupboards with dangerous items are childproof.
- Finger guards are fitted on internal doors.
- Toys are well maintained for safety and hygiene.
- Your playgroup is a SunSmart playgroup.
- Children are encouraged to play in the shade, wearing hats and protective clothing.
- There is soft fall material under and around outdoor equipment that meets safety regulations.
- The storage room is inaccessible to unsupervised children.
- The garden and outdoor area have been checked for poisonous plants.
- Children are encouraged to get out of a car on the passenger/kerb side.
- Poisonous substances, detergent and bleaches are kept out of reach.
- Play equipment meets Australian Standards regulations.
- Families are aware of their responsibilities regarding notifying the playgroup of a communicable illness and the applicable exclusion period.