



Respiratory Illness Policy

Always read this policy in conjunction with the Related Procedures identified below.

Policy Statement	This policy is to replace the previous COVID-19 pandemic policy. While we still experience COVID-19 cases, the global health emergency has ended. Hence as a community, we now live with COVID-19 in the same way we live with other respiratory illnesses such as the common cold. We must manage them as in a way to remain safe and healthy.
Purpose	Mater Dei acknowledges its duty of care to provide a safe environment for employees and also to the students, children, young adults, parents, carers, supporters, volunteers, visitors and contractors to our School, Preschool, Playgroup and NextPath Continuous Learning and Assessment and Therapy Programs across our Camden and Narellan Campuses. This policy aims to minimise risk and disruption to the day-to-day life and function of the organisation.
Risk Statement	It is important to note we may have employees, children, young adults and staff with compromised immune systems and greater vulnerability to respiratory illness, as well as children that are on prescribed medications for specific disabilities that can cause immune suppression, meaning an increased susceptibility to illnesses. Each individual with a compromised immune system needs to have a risk assessment completed and take advice from their medical professionals before attending School, or Early Childhood, Continuous Learning and Assessment & Therapy Programs.
Scope	All Mater Dei Programs and participants including employees, students, children, young adults, parents, carers, supporters, volunteers, visitors and contractors, and outlines the roles and responsibilities of all parties.

Related Documents <i>(Procedure, forms, guides)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Health Respiratory Illness • NSW Health COVID-19: Advice for disability service providers • NSW Health ECE guidance for families • NSW Health Influenzas • NSW Department of Education COVID Vaccination Policy • Wollongong CEO COVID policy • NDIS Latest advice on COVID 19 		
Policy Owner	Head of Human Resources		
Policy Status	Final		
Effective Date	01.02.2024	Review Date	01.02.2025

1 DEFINITION OF A RESPIRATORY ILLNESS

A respiratory illness is any of the diseases and disorders of the airways and the lungs that affect human respiration (breathing). Common Respiratory Illnesses include:

- Influenza (Common Cold / Flu)
- Coronavirus
- Pneumonia
- Upper respiratory tract infection
- Lower respiratory tract infection
- Bronchitis

Common symptoms of Respiratory Illness include:

- fever
- cough
- sore/ scratchy throat
- headaches
- muscle or body aches
- fatigue (tiredness)
- runny nose, and
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.



2 HOW ARE MOST RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES SPREAD?

Most respiratory illnesses are spread from person to person through:

- contaminated air droplets passing from an infected person who coughs or sneezes to other people, or
- touching objects or surfaces such as door handles, tables, handrails, tissues etc that have been contaminated by an infected person and then touching their mouth or face.

3 HOW TO MINIMISE THE SPREAD OF RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES

- Avoid others who are sick.
- Stay at home when sick especially with a temperature (Over 38.0 degrees).
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Clean hands regularly with hand sanitiser or soap and running water for 20 seconds.
- If you are sick, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- If you do need to leave home when you are sick, wear a mask and avoid contact with people at higher risk of severe illness.
- Effective cleaning practice including surfaces and high touch points like door handles, equipment, transport vehicles etc.
- Vaccination (As per below).

4 VACCINE POLICY RELATED RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES

The below table refers to 2 vaccines that help to minimise the spread & transmission of respiratory illnesses. The table sets out the National Health Recommendations as well as the Mater Dei policy related to each vaccine.

Please seek medical advice if you are pregnant, immunocompromised, or have any questions related to your individual medical needs, conditions, treatments before receiving these vaccines.

Vaccine	Disease info	National Health Recommendation	Mater Dei Policy	Link for further information
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention.	Primary course vaccination is recommended for all adults. The recommended schedule is 2 doses, 8 weeks apart. An additional (3rd) primary course dose is recommended for severely immunocompromised adults, given 8 weeks after the second dose.	<p><i>Mandatory:</i></p> <p>initial 2 vaccines with 2nd dose 8 weeks apart</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <p>3rd dose as per National Health Recommendation</p>	adults-aged-18-years-are-recommended-to-receive-covid-19-vaccine
Influenza	influenza, is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs, which are part of the respiratory system. The flu is caused by a virus	People are recommended to receive influenza vaccine every year.	<p><i>Highly recommended:</i></p> <p>For all staff especially those in close contact with children, participants and the general public.</p>	Vaccine influenza-flu

5 WHEN SHOULD AN EMPLOYEE RETURN TO WORK POST ILLNESS

If an employee is on Sick Leave due to symptoms of illness as per above, the employee may return when they are symptom free. If the employee tests positive for Influenza or COVID they can also return to work when symptom free or as per the advice of their medical practitioner. Normal sick leave entitlements, policy and procedures are to be followed.

6 FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about this document can be sought from your relevant Leadership Team Member, the Human Resources Team, or the Chief Executive Officer.