Playing with water fascinates and teaches young children. Many early educators consider water play an essential part of the curriculum. All water play requires close supervision for safety and control of the spread of germs.

Indoors, good choices for water play include sinks and water tables that have water flowing freely through them, or a separate dish basin for each child’s play. These choices have both play value and address sanitation risks. Outdoors, creative and sanitary water play options may be easier to arrange. For example, children enjoy playing in a large tilted PVC pipe with water running from a hose placed into the upper end. Children have fun catching and playing in the water as it comes down the pipe. A sprinkler provides great sanitary water play outdoors also.

Painting activities using small pots of washable paint can take place outdoors. Children in bathing suits can paint paper, fences, walls, pavement or themselves. After their work has been well-admired, the children can use a hand-held hose to clean up. Cleaning up is another learning activity.

Communal water tables should be filled with fresh drinkable water from the tap just before the children come to play at the table. Standing water grows germs. Some water tables have an inlet hose to hook up to the sink, and an outlet drain hose to connect to a drain. If you can’t set up that arrangement, you can place separate dish basins in a water table for children to play side-by-side. No matter what set-up you use, provide close supervision to be sure the children do not drink the water in which they play with their hands. Remember to wash and sanitize the water toys and containers each time a group of children finish playing in it.

Another measure that prevents spread of infection via communal water is to allow access to communal water only to children who have freshly washed hands. Do not allow children with cuts or sores on their hands, or runny noses to participate in communal water play.


Medication Error Causes Death

Not long ago, a one year old boy died from an overdose of Benadryl that he received in a child care facility in Montana. Giving medicine in group settings is risky. Parents should ask their child’s health care provider if it is possible to give medication doses outside child care hours.

A workshop on safe medication administration is available from ECELS on a fee-for-service basis. To learn more about and request this workshop, go to www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org. Click on the heading “Child Care Provider Training Opportunities.” Then scroll down to the workshop listing, and click “view all” to reach the description of the workshop on Safe Medication Administration. You can use “Request for Training Event” under “Handy Tools” on the left side of the page to ask for this workshop.
Is Glitter A Safe Art Material?

A director asked ECELS whether glitter is safe for children to use in child care. The answer is ‘yes’ for products that have been tested and meet national safety standards. The Art & Creative Materials Institute, Inc. (ACMI) sponsors a certification program to ensure that art materials are non-toxic or carry health warning labels where appropriate. Nine glitter products have been found safe. ACMI safety experts evaluate inhalation, skin contact and ingestion hazards.

ACMI is a non-profit trade association whose members manufacture art and creative materials. ACMI publishes a booklet on the safe use of art materials. They also publish a list of products that are approved under the ACMI certification program. Both of these publications are available free of charge. For the Internet listing of ACMI-certified products, go to www.acminet.org.

New Flu Vaccine Recommendations

The CDC says that the single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each fall. PA state regulations require that children in child care receive nationally recommended vaccines.

Certain people should be sure to get vaccinated each year. This group includes all children from 6 months of age to 6 years of age, and their out-of-home caregivers/teachers. Also, everyone over 50 years of age and all those who have serious health conditions with a high risk of serious complications from flu should get flu vaccine. Experts have shown that early education and child care programs not only spread flu to others at the program, but also in the community. Anyone over 6 months of age who wants to reduce the chance of getting the flu can get vaccinated also.

Encourage everyone involved with child care programs to get flu vaccine as soon as it is available in your community. Get the new flyers and posters that the CDC released about how to prevent the spread of respiratory disease from http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm.

Safe Drop-off and Pick-up Routines

Providers need to ensure the safety of enrolled children from the moment families approach the facility until the children leave the premises with an authorized adult. Observe how children arrive and leave. If you can’t fix something, do what you can to reduce the risk and warn staff and families about the danger. Use the following checklist to find and fix hazards before someone gets hurt.

- Are children exposed to hazards because they are loaded/unloaded from vehicles or have to cross paths where other vehicles are moving?
- Is there a way to keep track of the children at all times? Fingers can be pinched by heavy doors. If children must cross streets, traffic control is essential.
- Is help easily available if an adult has more than one child to supervise, or bulky items to bring in with the child? Is staff help at the point of drop-off needed for some families? Children should never be left alone in a vehicle, even if buckled into a car seat.
- Are children safely secured in age-appropriate vehicle seat restraints when they arrive and when they depart?
- Is photo-ID used so only authorized adults enter the facility to pick up children?
- Are children signed in and out whenever a different person becomes responsible for supervision of the child?
- What could go wrong? Is there an elevator, a stair-well, a gap in a fence into which a child might disappear while an adult is distracted for a moment?

Be sure to sign-up for E-Mail Alerts from ECELS to be informed about important health and safety news. To get these notices in your e-mail, use the instructions on the ECELS home page at www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org.

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