Infectious Disease Factsheet

Childhood

Infectious Diseases

Chicken Pox

**Time from exposure to illness**
2 to 3 weeks.

**Symptoms:**
Slight fever, runny nose, and a rash that begins as raised pink spots that blister and scab. Can be more severe in pregnant women and newborns.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, for 5 days from the onset of the rash and the blisters have dried.

**How can I help prevent spread?**
Immunise your child at 18 months of age. Immunisation is recommended for children at 12 years if they are not immune.

Conjunctivitis

**Time from exposure to illness**
1-3 days.

**Symptoms:**
The eye feels scratchy, is red and may water. Lids may stick together on waking.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, while there is discharge from the eye.

**How can I help prevent spread?**
Careful hand washing; avoid sharing towels. Antibiotics may be needed.

Gastroenteritis

**Time from exposure to illness**
Depends on the cause: several hours to several days.

**Symptoms:**
A combination of frequent loose or watery stools, vomiting, fever, stomach cramps, headaches.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, at least for 24 hours after diarrhoea stops.

**How can I prevent spread?**
Careful hand washing with soap and water after using the toilet or handling nappies and before touching food.
German Measles (Rubella)

**Time from exposure to illness**
2 to 3 weeks.

**Symptoms:**
Often mild or no symptoms: mild fever, runny nose, swollen nodes, pink blotchy rash that lasts a short time. Can cause birth defects if pregnant women are infected.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, for at least 4 days after the rash appears.

**How can I help prevent spread?**
Immunisation (MMR) at 12 months and 4 years of age.

Glandular Fever

**Time from exposure to illness**
2 to 3 weeks.

**Symptoms:**
Fever, headache, sore throat, tiredness, swollen nodes.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
No, unless sick.

**How can I help prevent spread?**
Careful hand washing, avoid sharing drinks, food and utensils, and kissing.

Hand Foot and Mouth Disease

**Time from exposure to illness**
3 to 7 days.

**Symptoms:**
Mild illness, perhaps with a fever, blisters around the mouth, on the hands and feet, and perhaps the nappy area.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, until the blisters have dried.

**How can I help prevent spread?**
Careful hand washing especially after wiping nose, using the toilet and changing nappies.

Head Lice

**Time from infestation to eggs hatching**
Usually 5 to 7 days.

**Symptoms:**
Itchy scalp, white specks stuck near the base of the hairs; lice may be found on the scalp.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
No, as long as head lice management is ongoing.

**How can I prevent spread?**
Family, friends and classroom contacts should be examined and managed if infested.
Hepatitis A

**Time from exposure to illness**
About 2 to 6 weeks.

**Symptoms:**
Often none in small children; sudden fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), dark urine, pale stools.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, for 2 weeks after first symptoms or 1 week after onset of jaundice.

**How can I help prevent spread?**
Careful hand washing; close contacts may need to have an injection of immunoglobulin; immunisation is recommended for some people.

Impetigo

**Time from exposure to illness**
1 to 3 days.

**Symptoms:**
Small red spots change into blisters that fill up with pus and become crusted; usually on the face, hands or scalp.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, until treatment starts. Sores should be covered with watertight dressings.

**How can I prevent spread?**
Careful hand washing.

Influenza

**Time from exposure to illness**
1 to 3 days.

**Symptoms:**
Sudden onset fever, runny nose, sore throat, cough, muscle aches and headaches.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, until they look and feel better.

**How can I prevent spread?**
Careful hand washing, especially after coughing, sneezing or wiping your nose. Immunisation, is recommended for the elderly and people with chronic illnesses.

Measles

**Time from exposure**
About 10 to 12 days until first symptoms, and 14 days until the rash develops.

**Symptoms:**
Fever, tiredness, runny nose, cough and sore red eyes for a few days followed by a red blotchy rash that starts on the face and spreads down the body and lasts 4 to 7 days.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, for at least 4 days after the rash appears.

**How can I prevent spread?**
Immunisation (MMR) at 12 months and 4 years. Contacts who are not immune may be excluded for 14 days after onset in the last case at the facility.
Meningococcal Disease

**Time from exposure to illness**
2 to 7 days.

**Symptoms:**
Sudden onset of fever and a combination of headache, neck, stiffness, nausea, vomiting, drowsiness or rash.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Seek medical attention immediately. Patient will need hospital treatment.

**How can I help prevent spread?**
Close contacts should see their doctors urgently if symptoms develop, and may need to have a special antibiotic. Immunisation with Meningococcal C vaccine at 12 months of age.

Molluscum Contagiosum

**Time from exposure to illness**
1 to 6 months.

**Symptoms:**
Multiple small lumps (2-5mm) on the skin that are smooth, firm and round, with dimples in the middle. Lumps in children are mostly on the face, trunk, and upper arms and legs. Symptoms can last 6 months to 2 years.

**Do I need to keep my child at home?**
No.

**How can I help prevent spread?**
Avoid contact sports when a child has uncovered lumps

Mumps

**Time from exposure to illness**
14 to 25 days.

**Symptoms:**
Fever, swollen and tender glands around the jaw.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, for 9 days after onset of swelling.

**How can I prevent spread?**
Immunisation (MMR) at 12 months and 4 years of age.

Ringworm

**Time from exposure to till illness**
Varies (may be several days).

**Symptoms:**
Small scaly patch on the skin surrounded by a pink ring.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, until the day after fungal treatment has begun.

**How can I help prevent spread?**
Careful hand washing.
Scabies

**Time from exposure to illness**
New infections: 2 to 6 weeks; reinfection: 1 to 4 days.

**Symptoms:**
Itchy skin, worse at night. Worse around wrists, armpits, buttocks, groin and between fingers and toes.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, until the day after the treatment has begun.

**How can I prevent spread?**
Close contacts should be examined for infestation and be treated if necessary. Wash linen, towels and clothing worn in the past 2 days in hot water and detergent.

Scarlet Fever

**Time from exposure to illness**
1 to 3 days.

**Symptoms:**
Sudden onset sore throat, high fever and vomiting, followed by a rash in 12 to 36 hours.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, until at least 24 hours of treatment has begun and the child is feeling better.

**How can I prevent spread?**
Careful hand washing. Sick contacts should see their doctor.

Slapped Cheek

**Time from exposure to illness**
1 to 2 weeks.

**Symptoms:**
Mild fever, red cheeks, itchy lace-like rash, and possibly cough, sore throat or runny nose. Can cause foetal disease in pregnant women if they have not been previously infected.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
No as it is most infectious before the rash appears.

**How can I prevent spread?**
Careful hand washing; avoid sharing drinks.

Whooping Cough

**Time from exposure to illness**
7 to 20 days.

**Symptoms:**
Starts with a running nose, followed by persistent cough that comes in bouts. Bouts maybe followed by vomiting and a whooping sound as the child gasps for air.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**
Yes, until the first 5 days of a special antibiotic have been taken.

**How can I help prevent spread?**
Immunisation at 2, 4, 6 months and 4 years of age. A special antibiotic can be given for the patient and close contacts. Case should be excluded from childcare and school until 5 days after treatment begins. Unimmunised contacts may be excluded from childcare unless they take the special antibiotic.
Related links

- Staying Healthy in Child Care - Preventing infectious diseases in child care (4th Ed)

Further information - Public Health Units in NSW
For more information please contact your doctor, local public health unit or community health centre - look under NSW Government at the front of the White Pages

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See full details of Public Health Units at

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