

Childhood Infectious Illnesses (Communicable Disease Recommendations)

adapted from Childhood Infectious Illnesses poster—2008 edition
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

EYE, EAR, NOSE, THROAT, AND CHEST

DISEASE, ILLNESS, OR ORGANISM	INCUBATION PERIOD	HOW IS IT SPREAD?	WHEN IS CHILD MOST CONTAGIOUS?	RETURN TO CENTER OR SCHOOL?	REPORT TO COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT	HOW TO PREVENT SPREADING INFECTION
Bronchiolitis, Bronchitis, Common Cold, Croup, Ear Infection, Pneumonia, Sinus Infection and Most Sore Throats <i>(respiratory diseases caused by many different viruses and occasionally bacterial)</i>	Variable, numerous causes	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes, or mouth of infected person; some viruses can live on surfaces (toys, tissues, doorknobs, etc.) for several hours	Variable, often from the day before symptoms begin up to 5 days after onset	No restriction unless child has fever, or is too uncomfortable, fatigued, or ill to participate in activities (center unable to accommodate child's increased needs for comfort and rest)	NO [†]	<p>For all Diseases: Good handwashing and hygiene; proper disposal of soiled tissues; avoid sharing linens; proper disinfection of surfaces and toys; cough into elbow or clothing when tissues unavailable</p> <p>Illnesses caused by influenza virus or pneumococcal bacteria can be reduced by timely immunization</p> <p>ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Influenza: Annual influenza vaccine recommended for children ages 6 months to 18 years as well as caregivers of young children (especially those <6 months); cover coughs and sneezes</p> <p>Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Avoid sharing linens, toys</p> <p>Cold Sore: Avoid kissing, sharing drinks or utensils</p>
Influenza* <i>(influenza virus)</i>	1 to 3 days	Highly contagious; contact with droplets from nose, eyes, or mouth of infected person; virus may live on surfaces (toys, tissues, doorknobs, etc.) for several hours	Variable, from the day before until the first 7 days of illness	After 24 hours without fever and child's symptoms are improving	NO [†]	
Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)	2 to 8 days	Highly contagious; contact with droplets from nose, eyes, or mouth of infected person; virus may live on surfaces (toys, tissues, doorknobs, etc.) for several hours	Variable, from the day before until 3 to 8 days or longer	After 24 hours without fever and child's symptoms are improving	NO [†]	
Pinkeye <i>(Pink or red eye; eyelid swelling; tearing and/or discharge)</i>	Variable, depending on the cause—bacterial, viral or allergic	Highly contagious; contact with secretions from eyes of an infected person or contaminated surfaces	Depending on the cause, up to 2 weeks	On recommendation of physician; bacterial conjunctivitis requires antibiotic treatment	NO [†]	
Cold Sore <i>(Herpes simplex virus)</i>	2 days to 2 weeks	Direct contact with infected oral secretions or lesions (drooling, kissing, thumb-sucking)	While lesions are present	After lesions are scabbed over and drooling controlled	NO [†]	

DISEASE, ILLNESS, OR ORGANISM	INCUBATION PERIOD	HOW IS IT SPREAD?	WHEN IS CHILD MOST CONTAGIOUS?	RETURN TO CENTER OR SCHOOL?	REPORT TO COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT	HOW TO PREVENT SPREADING INFECTION
Diphtheria* <i>(Corynebacterium diphtheria bacteria)</i>	2 to 7 days	Contact with discharges from the nose, eyes, mouth or skin lesions of infected individual	Onset of sore throat to 4 days after treatment has begun	After 2 negative cultures are obtained	YES Treatment of contacts may be necessary; ensure vaccination of contacts is up-to-date	<p>For all Diseases: Good handwashing and hygiene; proper disposal of soiled tissues; avoid sharing linens; proper disinfection of surfaces and toys</p> <p>Illnesses caused by influenza virus or pneumococcal bacteria can be reduced by timely immunization</p> <p>ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Diphtheria: Timely immunizations; Booster dose of either Td or Tdap is recommended for anyone over 11 years of age, including adults.</p> <p>Mononucleosis: Avoid kissing, sharing drinks or utensils</p> <p>Mumps: Timely immunizations</p> <p>Strep Throat: Avoid kissing, sharing drinks or utensils; exclude infected adults from food handling</p> <p>Tuberculosis (TB): Routine TB skin testing is not recommended for children; however, healthcare evaluations should assess risk of TB exposure and skin test if TB exposure is likely</p> <p>Whooping cough: Timely immunizations; Booster dose of Tdap is recommended for anyone over 11 years of age, including adults; cover coughs and sneezes</p>
Mononucleosis (Mono) <i>(Epstein-Barr virus)</i>	4 to 7 weeks	Kissing on mouth; sharing objects contaminated with saliva	Variable, often prolonged	No restriction unless child has fever, or is too uncomfortable, fatigued, or ill to participate in activities (center unable to accommodate child's increased needs for comfort and rest)	NO†	
Mumps* <i>(Mumps virus)</i>	12 to 25 days (usually 16 to 18 days)	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	Peak infectious time begins 2 days before swelling, but may range from 7 days before to 9 days after	9 days after parotid gland (neck) swelling begins	YES Treatment of contacts may be necessary; ensure vaccination of contacts is up-to-date	
Strep Throat <i>(Group A Streptococcus bacteria)</i>	1 to 5 days	Contact with droplets from nose and mouth. Rarely, outbreaks can be caused by contaminated food	From onset of symptoms until 24 hours after treatment	After at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment and no fever for 24 hours	NO†	
Tuberculosis (TB)	Many infected persons do not develop disease and have no symptoms. Risk of developing active disease is highest during first 1 to 2 years after infection	Airborne inhalation of droplets from nose and mouth of diseased person (children usually contract TB from close contact with a diseased adult)	Children with TB may be infectious to others when they have active disease of the lungs or throat	Only when Health Department or physician gives permission	YES Treatment of contacts may be necessary	
Whooping Cough*# <i>(Bordetella pertussis bacteria)</i>	5 to 21 days (usually 7 to 10 days)	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	Most infectious before cough onset (with onset of runny nose), continuing until child has been on antibiotics for 5 days. If untreated, infectious for 3 weeks after cough begins	After appropriate antibiotic treatment for 5 days	YES Treatment of contacts may be necessary; ensure vaccination of contacts is up-to-date	

DISEASE, ILLNESS, OR ORGANISM	INCUBATION PERIOD	HOW IS IT SPREAD?	WHEN IS CHILD MOST CONTAGIOUS?	RETURN TO CENTER OR SCHOOL?	REPORT TO COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT	HOW TO PREVENT SPREADING INFECTION
Viral Gastroenteritis <i>(vomiting and/or diarrhea)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adenovirus • Rotavirus • Norovirus 	Varies with pathogen (pathogen is a disease-causing organism), usually 1 to 5 days	Contact with stool, saliva or vomit from infected individual directly or from surfaces. Norovirus highly infectious; frequent cause of outbreaks	From 2 days before illness until vomiting and diarrhea improve	No fever or vomiting for 24 hours and fewer than 5 stools per day	NO [†]	<p>For all Diseases: Good handwashing and hygiene; proper disposal of dirty diapers; proper disinfection of changing tables, toys and food preparation areas. Avoid potentially contaminated beverages, food and water; divide food preparation and diapering responsibilities among staff</p> <p>ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:</p> <p>Bacterial Gastroenteritis: Proper cooking/handling of meats and raw eggs. (Reptiles should not be permitted in childcare centers. Pet reptiles should be handled safely in other settings.)</p> <p>Hepatitis A: Timely immunizations; consider Hepatitis A vaccine for caregivers; infected caregivers should not prepare meals for others</p> <p>Pinworms: Frequent, good handwashing, particularly by infected child and any caregivers assisting with toileting; trim fingernails, prevent nail-biting and fingers in mouth; proper disposal/cleaning of diapers, bedding, clothes, etc.; proper disinfection of changing tables and toileting areas</p>
Bacterial Gastroenteritis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathogenic <i>E. coli</i> • <i>Salmonella</i> • <i>Campylobacter</i> • <i>Shigella</i> • <i>Yersinia</i> 	Varies with pathogen, from 6 hours to 7 days	Contact with stool from infected individual (or occasionally pets); from contaminated food, beverages or water (especially raw eggs and improperly cooked meats)	When diarrhea is present. Pathogenic <i>E. coli</i> and <i>Shigella</i> highly infectious in small doses	No fever and stools are formed or fewer than 5 stools per day; pathogenic <i>E. coli</i> and <i>Shigella</i> require 2 negative stool cultures (exceptions may rarely be allowed by local health department for older children)	YES Treatment of contacts <i>not</i> necessary; follow-up stool tests are necessary for <i>Shigella</i> and <i>E. coli</i> infections	
Giardia <i>(a parasite)</i>	1 to 4 weeks (usually 7 to 10 days)	Contact with infected stool; consuming contaminated water or food	When diarrhea is present.	When stools are formed or fewer than 5 stools per day	YES Treatment of contacts <i>not</i> necessary; follow-up stool tests <i>not</i> necessary	
Hepatitis A*	2 to 7 weeks (usually 25 to 30 days)	Eating contaminated food/water; close contact with infected individuals; contact with infected stool	From 2 weeks before illness until 1 week after jaundice has begun	After 1 week from the onset of jaundice	YES Young children (younger than 5) often asymptomatic; one case may indicate a childcare center outbreak. Treatment of contacts <i>may</i> be necessary	
Pinworms	2 to 8 weeks	Pinworms lay microscopic eggs near rectum, causing itching. Infection spreads through ingestion of pinworm eggs, after contamination of hands by scratching	Eggs may survive up to 2 weeks <i>after</i> appropriate therapy AND resolution of rectal itching. Re-infection is common	No restriction, but treatment should be given to reduce spread	NO [†]	

MENINGITIS

DISEASE, ILLNESS, OR ORGANISM	INCUBATION PERIOD	HOW IS IT SPREAD?	WHEN IS CHILD MOST CONTAGIOUS?	RETURN TO CENTER OR SCHOOL?	REPORT TO COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT	HOW TO PREVENT SPREADING INFECTION
Haemophilus influenzae type B* <i>(Hib bacteria)</i> Meningitis or sepsis as determined by spinal tap/blood tests	Variable, usually 1 to 10 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	Until at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment, including antibiotics to eliminate carrier state	After at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment, including antibiotics to eliminate carrier state, and child well enough to participate	YES Treatment of contacts <i>may</i> be necessary; ensure vaccination of contacts is up-to-date	For all Diseases: Good handwashing and hygiene; proper disposal of soiled tissues; cover coughs and sneezes; avoid sharing drinks and utensils ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib bacteria): Timely immunizations Meningococcal meningitis: Timely immunizations Streptococcus pneumoniae: Timely immunizations Viral Meningitis: Proper disinfection of changing tables Neisseria Meningitidis: (meningococcal bacteria): Timely immunizations
Neisseria meningitidis <i>(Meningococcal bacteria)</i> Meningitis or sepsis as determined by spinal tap/ blood tests	Variable, usually less than 4 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	Until at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment, including antibiotics to eliminate carrier state	After at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment, including antibiotics to eliminate carrier state, and child well enough to participate	YES Treatment of contacts <i>may</i> be necessary	
Streptococcus pneumoniae* <i>(Pneumococcal bacteria)</i> Meningitis or sepsis as determined by spinal tap/ blood tests	Variable, usually less than 4 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	Until at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment	After at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment, and child well enough to participate	YES Treatment of contacts <i>not</i> necessary and <i>not</i> beneficial	
Viral Meningitis <i>(Usually enterovirus)</i>	Variable, usually 3 to 6 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth, or fecal material, often from healthy people	From the day before the illness until a week after onset	After 24 hours without fever, and child well enough to participate	YES Treatment of contacts <i>not</i> necessary; no specific treatment available	

DISEASE, ILLNESS, OR ORGANISM	INCUBATION PERIOD	HOW IS IT SPREAD?	WHEN IS CHILD MOST CONTAGIOUS?	RETURN TO CENTER OR SCHOOL?	REPORT TO COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT	HOW TO PREVENT SPREADING INFECTION
Chickenpox*# (<i>Varicella zoster virus</i>)	10 to 21 days (usually 14 to 16 days)	Airborne or direct contact with droplets from nose, mouth, or skin lesions of infected individuals or freshly contaminated objects	From 2 days before skin lesions develop until all lesions are crusted	When all lesions have crusted	NO†	For all Diseases: Good handwashing and hygiene; proper disposal of soiled tissues ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Chickenpox: Timely immunizations; cover coughs and sneezes
Fifth Disease# (<i>Human parvovirus B19</i>)	4 to 21 days (usually 4 to 14 days)	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	Only during the week BEFORE rash develops	No need to restrict once rash has appeared	NO†	German Measles: Timely immunizations; (Child care providers who may become pregnant should be rubella-immune)
German Measles*# (<i>Rubella virus</i>)	14 to 23 days (usually 16 to 18 days)	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person; may be transmitted to fetus across the placenta	From 5 days before until 7 days after the rash appears	7 days after the rash appears	YES Treatment of contacts usually <i>not</i> necessary; (exception: non-immune pregnant women)	Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease: Proper disinfection of changing tables, surfaces and toys
Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (<i>Coxsackievirus</i>)	3 to 6 days	Contact with fecal, oral or respiratory secretions	May be contagious for several weeks after infection	After 24 hours without fever and child is behaving normally	NO†	Head Lice: Should be watched closely for 2 weeks for new head lice. Close contacts need to be examined and treated for crawling lice. At home: wash bedding, clothes in hot water OR dry-clean OR seal in plastic bag for 10 days. Avoid sharing beds, combs, and brushes. At school: avoid sharing headgear; hang coats separately; use individual pillow/sleep mat
Head Lice (<i>parasites</i>)	Eggs (nits) hatch in 6 to 10 days	Close contact with infested individuals and sharing combs, brushes, hats, or bedding	When there are live insects on the head	After treatment, if crawling lice are gone. Remove nits; however nits alone should not be a reason for exclusion. Please read the product information carefully; some may not be appropriate for infants	NO†	Impetigo: Trim fingernails
Impetigo (<i>Staphylococcus or Streptococcus bacteria</i>)	1 to 10 days	Direct skin contact (especially through contaminated hands) or nasal discharge or contaminated surfaces	Until active lesions are gone or after 24 hours on antibiotics	After at least 24 hours of antibiotics	NO	Measles: Timely immunizations; cover coughs and sneezes

DISEASE, ILLNESS, OR ORGANISM	INCUBATION PERIOD	HOW IS IT SPREAD?	WHEN IS CHILD MOST CONTAGIOUS?	RETURN TO CENTER OR SCHOOL?	REPORT TO COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT	HOW TO PREVENT SPREADING INFECTION
Measles* <i>(Rubeola virus)</i>	7 to 18 days (usually 8 to 12 days)	Airborne or direct contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	From 4 days before the rash begins until 4 days after the start of the rash	At least 5 days after start of rash	YES Contacts <i>may</i> require treatment; program of vaccination <i>may</i> be recommended during outbreaks in childcare centers or schools	For all Diseases: Good handwashing and hygiene; proper disposal of soiled tissues ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: MRSA: Cover skin lesions; avoid contact with wound drainage; proper disposal of dressings; do not share personal items (towels, personal care items); clean and disinfect athletic equipment between use; wash and dry laundry on "hot" setting. Molluscum: Avoid contact sports. During outbreaks, further restrict person-to-person contact Ringworm: Avoid direct contact with infected individuals; avoid sharing combs, brushes, hats, etc.; proper disinfection of surfaces and toys Roseola: Proper disinfection of surfaces and toys Scabies: All household members should be treated simultaneously to prevent re-infestation; bedding and clothing worn next to skin during the 4 days before the start of treatment should be washed in hot water; clothing that cannot be laundered should be removed and stored for several weeks
MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staph aureus) <i>(a bacterial cause of skin boils and abscesses)</i>	Variable, occasionally initially mistaken as spider bite	Direct skin contact with infected person, wound drainage, or contaminated surfaces. Increased risk in crowded conditions	Draining wounds are very contagious and should be covered at all times	If wound drainage can be well contained under a dressing. Exclude from high-risk activities such as close contact team sports until completely healed	NO [†]	
Molluscum <i>(Molluscum contagiosum virus)</i>	Usually 2 to 7 weeks, sometimes longer	Direct skin contact with wound or contaminated surfaces	Not very contagious	No restriction	NO [†]	
Ringworm on body and Ringworm on scalp <i>(caused by fungus)</i>	Unknown	Direct skin contact with infected person or animal, or to surfaces or objects contaminated with fungus	From onset of lesions until treatment begins	Once treatment begins; ringworm on scalp requires oral medication	NO [†]	
Roseola <i>(virus)</i>	About 10 days	Respiratory droplets, often from healthy people	During fever	No restriction unless child has fever or is too ill to participate	NO [†]	
Scabies <i>(parasites)</i>	Usually 4 to 6 weeks, 1 to 4 days after re-exposure	Skin contact with infested individual; contact with bedding or clothes of infected person	From up to 8 weeks before skin rash appears until it has been treated with a scabicial cream	The day after adequate treatment begins	NO [†] If two or more documented cases in one center, treatment of center contacts <i>may</i> be necessary	

* These diseases should have been vaccinated against, if immunizations are up to date. Chicken pox may still occur, but usually in a milder form.

These diseases may be of concern to staff members who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant. Follow-up with obstetric health care provider is recommended after known or suspected contact.

† To reduce the spread of diseases in the classroom or child care center, it is recommended that similar illnesses (greater than three in the child care center or classroom) be reported to your county health department.

Exceptions to the exclusion/return to school guidelines listed on this chart may be made by local health department personnel and/or primary care physician on an individual case-by-case basis.

Adequate handwashing facilities, policies, and procedures are the keys to excellent hygiene that will eliminate or minimize transmission of these diseases and keep students in school.