

Common Infectious Illnesses (Communicable Disease Recommendations)

adapted from Common Infectious Illnesses poster—2000 edition
Georgia Department of Human Resources and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Disease, Illness, Organism	Incubation period	How is it spread?	When is child most contagious?	Return to school?
Chicken pox * # <i>(Varicella)</i>	10-21 days	Airborne or direct contact with droplets from nose, mouth and skin lesions of infected individuals	From 2 days before rash, until all lesions are dry and crusted	When all lesions have crusted (usually 7-8 days)
Cold Sore <i>(Herpes Simplex)</i>	2 days-2 weeks	Direct contact with infected oral lesions or secretions	While lesions are present	After lesions are scabbed over
Common Cold <i>(upper respiratory infection)</i>	1-5 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth—virus can live in environment 24 hours	Variable—from day before symptoms, until symptoms resolve	No exclusion, unless fever, or child too ill to attend
Conjunctivitis <i>(Pinkeye) (may be viral, bacterial or allergic)</i>	Variable, depending on cause	Contact with secretions from eyes, or contaminated surfaces	Variable—(allergic conjunctivitis is not contagious)	When cleared by physician, after 24 hours treatment if bacterial
Croup <i>(viral respiratory infection) causes "barky" cough</i>	Variable Usually 2-6 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth	Variable—usually from day before symptoms and for 3 days of illness	When breathing comfortably, cough improved, and no fever for 24 hours
Diphtheria *	2-5 days	Contact with discharge from nose, eyes, mouth or skin lesions	Onset of sore throat until 4 days after treatment begins	After 2 negative cultures are obtained
Ear Infection <i>(Otitis media) Sinusitis</i>	Variable	Not contagious	Not contagious	No exclusion unless child too sick to attend
Fever <i>(100.4 degrees or higher) no specific reason known or identified</i>	Unknown, until illness diagnosed	Unknown until illness identified, safe to assume it may be spread by contact with any secretions	Unknown, assume child is contagious while fever is present	After 24 hours without fever, and child behaving normally
Fifth Disease # <i>(Parvovirus) "Slapped cheek" appearance and a lacy rash</i>	4-21 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth	During the week before the rash develops	No need to restrict once rash has appeared

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Gastroenteritis, bacterial – (<i>E. coli</i> , <i>Salmonella</i> , <i>Shigella</i> , <i>Campylobacter</i> , <i>Yersinia</i>) usually have vomiting/ diarrhea	6 hours to 7 days, depending on organism	Contact with stool from infected individual; from contaminated food, beverages or water (especially raw eggs or improperly cooked meats)	When diarrhea is present	When diarrhea is resolved— <i>E. coli</i> and <i>Shigella</i> require 2 negative stool cultures
Gastroenteritis, viral (<i>Adenovirus</i> , <i>rotavirus</i> , <i>Norwalk virus</i>)	Varies with organism, usually 1-5 days	Contact with stool, saliva or vomit from infected individual; directly or from contaminated surfaces	From 2 days before illness, until vomiting and diarrhea improve	When no fever or vomiting for 24 hours, and fewer than 5 stools/day
German measles (<i>Rubella</i>) * #	14-21 days, usually 16-18 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 rash appears	7 days after rash appears
Giardia (a parasite which causes diarrhea)	1-4 weeks	Contact with infected stool; consuming contaminated water or food	When diarrhea is present	When stools are formed, or less than 5/day
Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (<i>Coxsackie virus</i>) (causes sores in these areas)	3-6 days	Contact with stool, oral or respiratory secretions	May be contagious for several weeks after infection	When no fever for 24 hours, and child is behaving normally
Head Lice (<i>Pediculosis</i>)	Eggs (nits) hatch in 6-10 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. Nits need to be removed, however nits alone should not be a reason for exclusion.
Hepatitis A	2-7 weeks	Eating contaminated food/water; close contact with infected individuals; contact with infected stool	From 2 weeks before the illness until 1 week after jaundice (yellow skin) has begun	After 1 week from the onset of jaundice (yellow discoloration of skin)
Hepatitis B * #	2-6 months	From contaminated needles, blood, bloody secretions, ear piercing, tattooing, sexual activity	Virus can be spread at any time, with the listed contact	After cleared by physician

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Impetigo <i>(Staphylococcus or streptococcus) skin infection</i>	1-10 days	Person-to-person skin contact (especially nasal discharge or hands)	Until active lesions are gone, or after 24 hours on antibiotics	After at least 24 hours of topical or oral antibiotics
Influenza	1-3 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	Variable, from the day before, until the first 5 days of illness	After 24 hours without fever and symptoms are improving
Measles (Rubeola) *	7-18 days, usually 8-12 days	Airborne or direct contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected persons	From 4 days before the rash begins until 4 days after the rash appears	At least 5 days after the appearance of the rash
Meningitis, bacterial <i>(Infection of the fluid lining the brain and spinal cord, causing fever, headache, neck stiffness, rash)</i>	1-10 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	Unknown, probably from several days before symptoms, until at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment	After at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment, including antibiotics to eliminate carrier state
Meningitis, viral <i>(Enterovirus)</i>	Usually 3-6 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes, mouth or stool of infected person	From the day before the illness, until fever has resolved	After 24 hours without fever, and child is behaving normally
Mononucleosis <i>(Mono)</i> <i>Epstein-Barr virus</i>	5-7 weeks	Close personal contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	Probably several days before the illness, until the fever has stopped	After 24 hours without fever, unless too sick to attend
Mumps*	12-25 days (usually 16-18 days)	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of an 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 swelling begins
Pinworms	2-6 weeks	Pinworms cause rectal itching. Microscopic eggs found on hands of infected children may contaminate surfaces. Infections spread through ingestion of eggs.	Eggs may survive up to 2 weeks after treatment, and after rectal itching stops. Reinfection is common.	No exclusion, but treatment should be given to reduce spread
Pneumonia <i>(viral or bacterial) lower respiratory infection</i>	Variable, numerous causes	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes and mouth of infected persons. Some viruses can live on surfaces up to 24 hours	Variable, from the day before through the first 3 days of the illness	No exclusion needed unless there is fever, or child is too ill to attend

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Poison Ivy <i>(not infectious) Reaction to sap on leaves of poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac</i>	2-3 days after contact with sap	Child is not contagious, only direct contact with sap may cause rash	Sap may be on clothes or skin for 12-24 hours after contact with leaves, or until child bathes	No exclusion
Ringworm <i>(Tinea capitis, corporis, pedis) Fungal infection of scalp, body, or feet</i>	Unknown	Direct skin contact with infected people or animals, or with surfaces contaminated with fungus; scalp lesions from contact with barber clippers or shared brushes	From onset of lesions until treatment begins	After treatment begins—scalp infection usually requires medication by mouth, others may be treated topically
Scabies <i>(mites which burrow under the skin, causing severe itching)</i>	Usually 4-6 weeks, 1-4 days after re-exposure	Skin contact with infested individuals; contact with bedding or clothes of infested person	From up to 8 weeks before skin rash appears until it has been treated	The day after adequate treatment begins
Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever <i>(Group A Streptococcus) Scarlet fever is a strep throat infection with a rash</i>	1-5 days	Contact with droplets from nose and mouth	From onset of symptoms until 24 hours after treatment begins	After at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment and no fever for 24 hours
Tuberculosis	Some infected persons do not develop disease, but risk is highest 1-2 years after exposure	Airborne or contact with droplets from nose and mouth of infected person (children usually contract TB from close contact with an infected adult)	Children with TB usually are not infectious to others	Only when Health Department gives permission
Whooping Cough * <i>(Pertussis)</i>	5-21 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 is on antibiotics for 5 days—is infectious for 3 weeks after cough begins, if not treated.	After antibiotic treatment for 5 days

* 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.

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

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