

Common Childhood Illness Reference Sheet

Direct Contact – Germs are spread through physical contact with an infected person. This can happen through skin-to-skin contact, contact with mucous membranes (nose, mouth, eyes), or secretions (saliva, coughing/sneezing). Direct contact requires close interaction which can include coughing or sneezing in close proximity.

Indirect Contact – Germs are spread by touching objects that have been contaminated from an infected person. Often germs are spread in child-care setting when children put objects in their mouth or when children cough or sneeze onto objects. Germs can enter the body through the mouth, nose or eyes.

The quick reference guide is for information only. Diagnosis of an infection must be made by a health care provider.

A “star image” ★ beside a disease indicates the disease is of public health significance and must be reported to Public Health.

Illness	Symptoms	How it Spreads	When is it Contagious	Treatment	Prevention	Exclusion & Reporting to Health Unit
★ Chicken Pox (Varicella)	Viral Infection Fever and cold-like symptoms followed by a rash Itchy red rash which turns into fluid filled blisters and crust over Usually, a full body rash	Through the air Direct contact with the fluid from blisters or with mucous membranes or secretions A pregnant person can pass it to their baby	1-2 days before rash starts until all blisters have crusted over; (usually 5 days)	Can be treated with antiviral medication, but this is not common	Vaccination can prevent chicken pox Don't touch the fluid in a chicken pox blister Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, use your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.	Exclusion - No Can attend if children feel well enough to participate Report – Yes Next business day
Fifth Disease (Parvovirus B19, Erythema Infectiosum, or “slapped cheek syndrome”)	Viral infection Fever, headache, mild cold like symptoms Starts with a red rash on the cheeks (Slapped cheek rash), followed by a red lace-like rash on the trunk and arms and rest of the body Rash may come and go for over a week	Direct contact with mucous membranes or secretions Indirect contact	Most contagious a few days before the rash appears. Once the rash appears, the person is no longer contagious	There is no medication to treat it Provide support to keep children comfortable Pregnant staff that has been in contact with the child should contact their doctor	There is no vaccine to prevent the infection Frequent hand-hygiene Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and toys Carefully wash or dispose of articles soiled with nose and throat discharges	Exclusion – No Regardless of rash, child can attend if feeling well enough to participate in activities Report – No
★ Gastrointestinal Illness: Vomiting and/or Diarrhea	Viral or bacterial infections; Often the cause is unknown Vomiting, diarrhea (unformed or watery stool), fever, loss of appetite, stomach pain, fatigue, headache	Direct contact with stool or vomit Indirect contact	Variable – usually upon onset of symptoms to 48 hours after symptoms have resolved	No specific treatment Fluid replacement to help prevent dehydration	Frequent hand hygiene especially after changing diapers and toileting Clean contaminated surfaces, toys, clothing and linen	Exclusion - Yes Exclude until 48 hours after symptoms have resolved Report – Yes: Outbreaks only If an unusual increase (i.e. two or more children with gastroenteritis in the same room/group within 48 hours period) for an outbreak assessment and additional support.
Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (Enterovirus, coxsackie virus)	Viral infection Fever, headache, sore throat, loss of appetite, lack of energy Small painful ulcers in mouth, and a rash most often seen on the hands and feet The rash appears as red spots, often with a blister	Direct contact with the fluid from blisters or with mucous membranes or secretions, stool Indirect contact	Most contagious during the first week of illness and when symptoms are present Virus can be found in the stool for several weeks	There is no medication to treat it Provide support to keep children comfortable Infection usually goes away in 7-10 days	There is no vaccine to prevent the infection Frequent hand-hygiene Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and toys Carefully wash or dispose of soiled articles	Exclusion – Yes Exclude until they are feeling well, have been without a fever for 24 hours, and there are no open blisters on the skin or in the mouth Report – No
Headlice	Tiny wingless, crawling insects that live on the scalp. It does not spread disease. Itchy scalp, but it's possible to have head lice without any symptoms Scratch marks or small red lesions like a rash Lice and nits are often found very close to the scalp, at the bottom of the neck and behind the ears	Direct contact through hair-to-hair contact Indirect contact by sharing hats, combs, hairbrushes, helmets and headphones	As long as there are live lice and nits present	Treatment shampoos and rinses are available at pharmacies without a prescription	Avoid hair-to-hair contact Do not share combs, brushes, towels, headphones, and clothing that comes into contact with the head Dispose of or wash & dry) lice or nits from items that touch the head (hats, pillowcases, combs) – wash in hot water and dry them using the hot setting of the dryer for at least 15 minutes. Clothing and items that are not washable can be stored and sealed in an airtight bag for 2 weeks	Exclusion - No It is recommended children should be treated, but they can continue to attend as usual. 'No-nit' policies that keep children with head lice or nits after treatment away from school are not necessary. Report – No
Impetigo - Caused by Streptococcus or Staphylococcus bacteria	Bacterial Skin Infection Cluster of red bumps or blisters that ooze or cause a yellow crust on the mouth, nose or skin that is not covered by clothes May include fever, pain, swelling and feeling weak	Direct contact - touching the impetigo rash Indirect contact: From bed sheets, towels or clothing that have been in contact with someone's skin.	Until blisters have dried up If caused by streptococcus bacteria – until 24 hours after the start of antibiotics	Antibiotics taken by mouth or cream spread on the skin – prescribed by a doctor	Frequent hand-hygiene Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and toys Carefully wash or dispose of articles soiled with nose and throat discharges; or fluid from the blisters	Exclusion - Yes Until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment Report - No

★ Measles	Viral Infection Fever, runny nose, cough, drowsiness, irritability, red eyes, small white spots on the inside of the mouth and throat A blotchy red rash appears on the face 3-7 days after initial symptoms and spreads down the body	Through the air – the virus can survive floating in the air for up to 2 hours Direct contact with mucous membranes or secretions Indirect contact	Highly contagious for 4 days before rash and 4 days after rash begins	There is no medication to treat it Provide support to keep children comfortable Pregnant staff that have been in contact with the child should contact their doctor	Vaccination is the best protection against measles	Exclusion – Yes Exclusion is required for cases and some contacts. Public Health will provide direction Report – Yes, immediately
Molluscum Contagiosum	Tiny “pinpoints” that turn into smooth and shiny white-pink bumps with a dip in the middle. They can appear anywhere on the body The average child has 1-20 bumps, but some can have hundreds. Bumps can be itchy, red, sore and/or swollen	Direct contact - touching bumps Indirect contact: From bed sheets, towels or clothing that have been in contact with someone’s skin	The exact time you are contagious is unknown. Once the bumps are gone, it is no longer contagious	There is no specific treatment, and will disappear on its own	There is no vaccine to prevent the infection Frequent hand-hygiene Wash contaminated bedding/towels that is used by someone with the infection	Exclusion – No Can attend as usual Report – No
Mononucleosis (Caused by Epstein-Barr Virus)	Viral Illness causing fever, sore throat, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes, enlarged spleen, jaundice 50% of people may have no symptoms	Direct contact with mucous membranes or secretions Indirect contact	Can be infectious for a year or more after infection	There is no medication to treat it Provide support to keep children comfortable	Frequent hand-hygiene Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and toys Carefully wash or dispose of articles soiled with nose and throat discharges	Exclusion - No Can attend as usual, consult physician about physical activity Report - No
★ Mumps	Viral Infection Fever, swollen salivary glands at the jaw line on one or both sides of the face, headache	Direct contact with mucous membranes or secretions Indirect contact	7 days before the onset of swollen salivary glands, to 5 days after the onset of swelling	There is no medication to treat it Provide support to keep children comfortable	Vaccination can prevent Mumps infection Frequent hand-hygiene Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and toys Carefully wash or dispose of articles soiled with nose and throat discharges	Exclusion – Yes Exclude for 5 days after onset of swollen glands or symptoms onset Report – Yes
★ Pertussis (Whooping cough)	Starts with cold symptoms, very runny nose, coughing, mild fever After a week, it often progresses to severe coughing, which may be followed by “whoop” sound during inhalation, difficulty breathing or vomiting	Direct contact with mucous membranes or secretions Indirect contact	If untreated – can be contagious for up to 3 weeks after onset of symptoms If treated – contagious for 5 days after the start of medication	If the illness is discovered early enough, before the coughing spells start, antibiotics may help If treatment is started later, antibiotics won’t help. This is because the bacteria have already done their damage. But antibiotics may still be given to prevent the bacteria spreading to someone else	Vaccination can prevent pertussis Frequent hand-hygiene Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and toys Carefully wash or dispose of articles soiled with nose and throat discharges	Exclusion – Yes Avoid contact with young children, infants and women in their third trimester, until the completion of 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment or 21 days if not treated. This includes school and daycare. Report - Yes
Pink Eye – Conjunctivitis	Viral or bacterial infection Red, itchy, painful eyes Discharge from eyes cause crusting, often during sleep	Direct contact with mucous membranes or secretions Indirect contact	Bacterial – at the time when symptoms begin to 24 hours after antibiotic treatment is started Viral – as long as symptoms are present	Eye drops or ointment may be required if bacterial infection	Frequent hand hygiene Do not share towels/washcloths, pillowcases and bedding Clean contaminated surfaces and toys Carefully wash or dispose of articles soiled with tears or eye discharge, or from coughing or sneezing	Viral Exclusion – NO Can attend as long as feel well enough to participate Bacterial Exclusion – Yes Until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment Report - No
Pinworm (Enterobiasis)	Tiny, white thread-like roundworm that live in the rectum Pinworms can be uncomfortable, but they do not cause disease Anal itching, disturbed sleep, irritability Some children have no symptoms	Direct Contact when an infected child scratches the itchy area and transfers eggs to another child’s mouth Indirect contact with items contaminated with the eggs (toys, toilet seats, baths, bedding)	As long as pinworms are present and have not been destroyed by treatment of the child and their environment Eggs can live for up to 2 weeks outside the body, on clothing, bedding or other objects	Oral medication can be prescribed which takes up to 2 weeks to eliminate pinworms, may require a second dose 2 weeks later Other family members may need to be treated at the same time to avoid re-infestation	Frequent hand-hygiene Change and clean bed linens and underclothes of infected children without shaking (which will scatter eggs) Open blinds and curtains in the bedrooms during the day – eggs are sensitive to sunlight If laundry is being sent home - keep in sealed plastic bags Bathing children in the morning using a shower or stand-up tub bath Advise children and staff to keep fingernails short and avoid nail-biting	Exclusion - No It is recommended children should be treated, but they can continue to attend as usual. Report - No

Respiratory Illness – Cold and flu-like symptoms	Usually a viral illness (examples: influenza, COVID19, Rhinovirus, Parainfluenza virus) Cough, runny nose, sore throat, headache, lethargy, poor appetite, muscle/joint/body aches Often unknown cause Complications can include ear infections, breathing problems, dehydration	Direct contact with mucous membranes or secretions Indirect contact	Variable depending on virus causing the symptoms	There is often no medication for treatment Provide support to keep children comfortable Ease pain, aches, or a fever (medication, rest, hydration)	Frequent hand hygiene Cover mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze Do not share cutlery, glasses etc. Clean contaminated surfaces and toys	Exclusion – Yes Remain home until symptoms have improved at least 24 hours, and no fever for 24 hours Report – No** If multiple children are ill that is above average for your facility, please contact the Health Unit for support in reducing the spread of illness. **Outbreaks will generally not be declared; Consideration may be given in circumstances such as severe illness, diseases that can be prevented by vaccine (i.e. pertussis, mumps).
Ring Worm	Fungal infection causing ring shaped raised rash on scalp, body, groin or feet Itchy & red, and can cause hair loss	Direct Contact with the rash Indirect contact with (combs, clothing, showers and pool surfaces) or infected animals	As long as rash is untreated and/or uncovered	Skin can be treated with an antifungal ointment or cream for 2-3 weeks For more severe infections, prescription medication may need to be taken by mouth	Frequent hand-hygiene Do not share combs, hairbrushes, face cloths or towels Use flip-flops or shoes on feet in public locker rooms, showers and pools Wash sports clothing regularly	Exclusion - Yes Until treatment has started Report - No
Roseola Infantum (Sixth Disease)	Viral infection A fever appears suddenly and lasts 3-5 days When the fever ends, a rosy-pink raised rash usually develops on the face and body The spots (rash) will turn white if you press on them and they may have a lighter colour ring around them	Direct contact with mucous membranes or secretions Indirect contact	Most contagious during the fever stage, before the rash develops	There is no medication to treat it Provide support to keep children comfortable. Ease pain, aches or a fever (medication, rest, hydration)	Frequent hand hygiene Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, put in the waste basket or use your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands Do not share eating or drinking utensils Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and toys	Exclusion - No Can attend as long as child is well enough to participate in activities Report - No
Rotavirus	Viral infection Vomiting, fever, watery diarrhea, dehydration	Direct contact with stool or vomit. Indirect contact.	Upon onset of symptoms until approximately 8 days after onset	There is no medication to treat it Fluid replacement to help prevent dehydration	Vaccination can prevent Rotavirus Follow diaper changing best practice Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces, toys, clothing and linen	Exclusion – Yes Exclude until 48 hours after symptoms have resolved Report - No
Scabies	Skin condition caused by tiny insects called mites. They burrow under the skin and lay eggs Scabies can be uncomfortable, but they do not directly cause disease Itchy red rash, usually between fingers and toes, wrists, or groin with thread-like lines, tiny red bumps and scratch marks	Direct contact (prolonged) with infested skin Indirect contact with clothing or personal items of an infested person The mites can live off the skin up to 3 days	As long as the person is infested and until mites and eggs are destroyed by treatment	Cream or lotion that is prescribed by a doctor Everyone who lives in the home and anyone who has had close skin-to-skin contact should be treated at the same time Treatment may need to be repeated	Wash all bed linens, towels and clothes in hot water and dry in a dryer at the hottest setting Items that are not washable can be sealed in an airtight plastic bag for 1 week to kill the mites	Exclusion – Yes Exclude until the day after the first treatment was applied Report to HU - No
Strep throat & Scarlet Fever	Bacterial Infection (group A strep bacteria) Strep Throat - Sore, red throat; fever, tiredness, headache, sores around mouth, swollen glands in the neck Scarlet Fever – Similar to strep throat but includes a pink-red skin rash that feels like sandpaper and “strawberry” tongue (white coating on tongue with bright red patch)	Direct contact with mucous membranes or secretions Indirect contact	From onset of illness until 24 hours of antibiotic treatment received	Antibiotics may be prescribed by a doctor Provide support to keep children comfortable Ease pain, aches, or a fever (medication, rest, hydration)	Frequent hand hygiene Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, put in the waste basket or use your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands Do not share eating or drinking utensils Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and toys	Exclusion – Yes Exclude until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment and if children feel well enough to participate in activities. Report - No

References:

Canadian Paediatric Society. Information for parents from Canada’s paediatricians. [Health conditions and treatments | Caring for kids](#) Accessed 12-Sep-2025

Infectious Diseases Protocol (2023). Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ontario.

Heymann, D.L. (2015). Control of Communicable Diseases Manual (20th Edition).