

A Guide to Common Infections

Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit

DISEASE	TRANSMISSION	SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS	INFECTIOUS PERIOD	RECOMMENDED ACTION	REPORTING
Respiratory Infections					
Common Cold	Spread person to person via droplets; indirect spread via contaminated hands, objects, surfaces. Almost always viral.	Runny nose, sore throat, cough, decreased appetite. Fever with some colds.	1 day before to 7 days after onset.	Do not exclude unless too ill to take part in the activities.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Ear Infections (Otitis Media)	Complication of cold.	Earache or irritability, fever and cold symptoms.	Not infectious	Do not exclude unless too ill to take part in the activities.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Influenza	Virus spread through air or by indirect contact with contaminated hands, objects, surfaces. Incubation period 1-4 days.	Sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, generalized aches and pains, loss of appetite, cough. Weakness and cough can last several days to weeks. Influenza can result in serious complications for the elderly and those with chronic health problems.	Before symptoms have developed until 5-7 days after onset of symptoms.	Exclude until well enough to participate. Usually 5-7 days.	Report to Public Health.
Strep Throat Scarlet Fever	Bacteria spread from person to person through the air. Incubation period 1-3 days.	Fever, sore throat. General discomfort and tender glands on the neck. Rash on neck, back, chest and inner surface of the thighs. Face looks flushed. Rash feels like fine sandpaper and is not itchy. Skin peels 2-3 weeks after the rash disappears.	Until 24 hours after treatment begun. If untreated 10-21 days.	Exclude until 24 hours after treatment begun.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Whooping Cough (Pertussis)	Bacteria in respiratory secretions. Spread from person to person, through the air. Very infectious. Incubation period 6-20 days	Begins as cold with profuse runny nose and cough. Cough gets progressively worse and occurs in paroxysms, or spasms. Face red or purple during coughing spells and child may vomit. Fever uncommon.	From onset of runny nose until 3 weeks after onset of paroxysms or whooping.	Exclude until 5 days after start of antibiotics or 3 weeks if no treatment given. Contacts may need antibiotics or vaccine.	Report to Public Health.
R.S.V. (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)	Virus is in respiratory secretions. Spread person to person by direct contact with contaminated secretions or indirect contact with contaminated hands, objects, and surfaces. Frequent cause of illness in children under 2 yrs. Incubation period 2-8 days.	Fever, runny nose, cold-like symptoms that may develop into more serious symptoms such as coughing, difficulty breathing, rapid breathing and wheezing.	Before symptoms have developed until 3-8 days after onset of symptoms. Young infants may shed the virus for 3-4 weeks.	Exclude until well enough to participate – usually 3-8 days.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Gastrointestinal Infections					
Campylobacter	Bacteria excreted in stool. Poultry, beef, unpasteurized milk or other contaminated food may be source of infection. Infected pets may be a source. Incubation period 1-10 days.	Diarrhea, cramps, abdominal pain, fever, nausea and vomiting, sometimes blood in stool.	For duration of diarrhea. If untreated 2-7 weeks.	Exclude until no diarrhea or other symptoms for 24 hours.	Report to Public Health.

* **Handwashing: Remember handwashing is the single most important procedure we can follow to prevent the transmission of disease. For all diseases, handwashing is always a recommended action.**

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Cryptosporidium	Parasite excreted in stool of infected persons and animals. Spread person to person and in contaminated food or water. Incubation period 2-25 days.	Watery diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, headaches and sometimes vomiting. Symptoms may last 1-2 weeks or as long as a month. Symptoms can come and go over time. Immunocompromised people are at risk of serious complications.	From onset of diarrhea until several weeks after symptoms stop.	Exclude until no diarrhea or other symptoms for 24 hours.	Report to Public Health.
Gastroenteritis	Microorganism excreted in stool of infected persons. May be viral, bacterial or parasitic. Spread directly from person to person; indirectly from hands of staff and children, objects, surfaces, food, or water contaminated with microorganisms (young children frequently put fingers and objects in mouth).	Increase in frequency of stools and/or change to unformed, loose, or watery stool. Fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, mucus or blood in stool may also occur. Diarrhea may be dangerous in infants and young children because the loss of fluid may cause dehydration.	For duration of diarrhea.	Exclude until no diarrhea or other symptoms for 24 hours.	Report to Public Health if a group of people are experiencing the same symptoms.
Escherichia coli (E.coli)	Bacteria excreted in stool of infected persons. Poultry, beef, unpasteurized milk or other food, and farm animals may be a source of infection. Incubation period 12-60 hours.	Only verotoxigenic or VTEC strains cause illness in humans. Fever, diarrhea, blood in stool, cramps. Children and elderly are at most risk of serious complications.	For duration of the diarrhea.	Exclude until no diarrhea or other symptoms for 24 hours.	Report to Public Health.
Giardia	Parasite in stool of infected persons. Spread person to person. Common in child care settings. Incubation period 1-4 weeks.	Most children have no symptoms. May have loss of appetite, vomiting, cramps, diarrhea, mushy stool, excessive gas.	Until cured.	Exclude until treated and no diarrhea for 24 hours.	Report to Public Health.
Hepatitis A	Virus excreted in stool of infected persons. Spread person to person; may also be spread in contaminated food or water. Incubation period 15-50 days.	Most children have no illness. May have fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, jaundice (yellow colour in skin and eyes).	2 weeks before to 1 week after onset of jaundice.	Exclude for 1 week after onset of jaundice. Immune globulin or vaccine may be indicated for children, staff, and family members to control outbreaks.	Report to Public Health.
Norwalk Virus Norwalk-like Virus	Virus spread person to person in the stool and via air. Incubation period 1-2 days.	Nausea, vomiting, watery diarrhea, cramps.	Duration of illness. Usually 12-60 hours.	Exclude until no diarrhea and/or vomiting for 48 hours.	Report to Public Health Unit.
Rotavirus	Virus excreted in stool of infected persons. Spread person to person. Most common cause of diarrhea in child care settings. Incubation period 2 days.	Fever and vomiting precede watery diarrhea. Dehydration may occur rapidly in infants. Children and elderly are most at risk of serious complications.	For duration of diarrhea. Usually 3-8 days.	Exclude until no diarrhea and/or vomiting for 48 hours.	Report to Public Health.
Salmonella	Bacteria acquired mainly from food, especially eggs and egg products, beef, poultry, unpasteurized milk. Incubation period 6-72 hours.	Sudden onset of headache, vomiting, fever followed by diarrhea.	While having diarrhea. Can be several days to several weeks.	Exclude until treated and no diarrhea for 24 hours. Treatment is not always needed.	Report to Public Health.
Shigella	Bacteria excreted in stool of infected persons. Spread person to person. Spread in contaminated food, water or milk, can be fly borne. Incubation period 1-7 days.	Diarrhea, fever, blood and/or mucus in stool, cramps.	For duration of diarrhea. Highly infectious. If untreated up to 4 weeks.	Exclude until treated and no diarrhea for 24 hours. Additional precautions are necessary for foodhandlers, childcare providers and health care providers.	Report to Public Health.
Yersinia	Bacteria excreted in stool of infected persons. Spread person to person. Infected animals, especially pigs, may be a source. Incubation period 3-10 days.	Watery diarrhea, cramps, abdominal pain, fever, headaches, nausea and vomiting, Diarrhea is more severe in children.	For duration of diarrhea or other symptoms. If untreated, 2-3 months.	Exclude until no diarrhea or other symptoms for 24 hours.	Report to Public Health.

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Skin and Scalp Infections					
Head Lice	Spread person to person. Requires close, direct contact. Infested hats, clothes may also be involved in spread.	Most children have no symptoms. Some will have itching of scalp. Nits (eggs) are seen attached to hairs near scalp.	Until treated and lice and nits (eggs) are removed.	According to organization's policy, exclude until treated with a product that contains an active ingredient that kills head lice and all nits (eggs) are removed. Check all children and staff for presence of lice and nits and exclude accordingly.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Herpes Simplex	Spread person to person. Virus in saliva and infected sores. Incubation period 2-12 days	Many infections occur without any symptoms. May cause high fever, many painful ulcers in mouth. May recur as cold sores.	For one week during first infection; 5 days during recurrent cold sores.	Exclude for severe illness. Exclusion not indicated for recurrent cold sores.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Impetigo	Bacteria spread person to person by direct contact.	Pustules or crusted rash on face or exposed parts of body (arms and/or legs).	From onset of rash until 1 day after start of treatment with antibiotics.	Exclude until antibiotic treatment has been taken for 1 full day.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Scabies	Parasite spread person to person. Requires close direct contact. Incubation period 4-6 weeks in persons without previous exposure.	Very itchy rash. In infants under 2 years, rash may occur anywhere on body. In older children, rash usually appears on fingers, elbows, armpits, abdomen. Mite burrows under skin leaving eggs and faeces in black-red bumps.	Until mites and eggs are destroyed by treatment. Usually after 1 or occasionally after 2 courses of treatment a week apart.	Exclude until one treatment completed. Treatment of contacts may be necessary to control outbreak.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Other Infections					
Chickenpox (Varicella-Zoster)	Virus spread person to person and via air. Very infectious. May develop following contact with person having shingles. Incubation period 14-21 days.	Small red pimples which develop into blisters, then become encrusted. Usually affect face, hands, neck and extremities.	1-4 days before to 5 days after onset of rash.	Children with mild illness should be allowed to return to school as soon as well enough to participate normally in all activities.	Report to Public Health. Ensure handwashing. Varicella-Zoster Immune Globulin (VZIG) may be indicated under certain circumstances.
Cytomegalovirus (CMV)	Virus spread person to person. Requires intimate contact. Virus in urine and saliva. Can infect fetus during pregnancy.	Usually causes no illness.	Whenever virus present in urine or saliva.	No exclusion required.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Cocksackie A (Hand/Foot/Mouth Disease)	Virus spread person to person by direct contact with nose and throat discharges, saliva, fluid from blisters or from stool. Incubation period 3-7 days.	Fever, sore throat, lack of energy, sores in the mouth, and a rash with blisters usually located on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet and sometimes on the buttocks.	Most contagious during first week of illness. Can continue to transmit virus in stools for weeks. Most common in summer and fall.	Do not exclude unless too ill to participate. Emphasize proper handwashing between diaper changes.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Fifth Disease	Virus spread from person to person through contact with respiratory secretions. Exposure poses a concern to pregnant women.	Mild fever, very red rash begins on cheeks (slapped face appearance) followed in 1 to 4 days by a lace-like rash on the trunk and extremities which fades but may come and go for 1 to 3 weeks.	Greatest before onset of rash. Probably not communicable after onset of rash.	Do not exclude if well enough to take part in activities.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Hepatitis B	Virus found in blood, semen, vaginal fluids and saliva. Can be spread by unprotected sex, blood contact, bites and from infected mother to newborn at time of birth. Incubation period 4-25 weeks.	This infection targets the liver. Symptoms may include flu like illness, nausea and vomiting, joint and muscle pain, rash and jaundice. Many people do not experience any symptoms. May lead to liver disease or liver cancer.	From weeks before onset to months or years after recovery from illness. May be infectious for life.	No exclusion required. Immediately report any bites that cause bleeding. Hepatitis B vaccine and/or Hepatitis B immune globulin may be indicated under special circumstances.	Report to Public Health.

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Measles (Red Measles)	Virus in respiratory secretions. Spread from person to person, through the air. Very infectious. Incubation period 7-18 days.	Fever, cough, runny nose, inflamed eyes for 1 to 3 days before onset of rash. Rash is large red spots which often join together, starts on face and spreads rapidly over body. Illness lasts 5 to 10 days.	3 to 5 days before onset of rash until 4 days after onset of rash.	Exclude all cases until at least 4 days after onset of rash. All contacts born after 1970 without proof of immunization should be immunized. Exclude all children who lack proof of immunization from school/daycare until vaccinated or until 2 weeks after last case in a facility. Immune Globulin may be indicated.	Report to Public Health immediately. Speed is essential in limiting outbreaks of measles.
Meningitis	Spread from person to person, requiring close direct contact. Can be viral or bacterial.	Fever, marked fussiness, sleepiness, vomiting, stiff neck, coma, seizures. Very severe infection.	Until treated with antibiotics (if caused by bacteria).	Exposed children and staff may need antibiotics or vaccine. Seek emergency care immediately.	Report to Public Health immediately.
Mumps	Virus in respiratory secretions. Spread from person to person, through the air.	Enlargement of salivary glands causing swelling of cheeks and face. May have fever, headache, abdominal pain. Many children have no illness.	6-7 days before to 9 days after swelling. Most infectious 2 days before onset of swelling.	Exclude for 9 days after onset of symptoms. Ensure all children are vaccinated.	Report to Public Health.
Pinkeye (Conjunctivitis)	Bacteria spread person to person by contact with secretions from eye. Incubation period usually 24-72 hours.	Redness, itching, pain, discharge from eye. After sleep the discharge forms dry, yellowish crusts on eyelashes.	For duration of illness or until 24 hours after treatment started.	Exclude only if discharge is pus (yellow, thick) and then until the antibiotic has been taken for one full day.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Pinworm	Parasite spread person to person from anus to mouth or indirectly through clothing, bedding, food, dust, or other egg contaminated articles. Incubation period 2-6 weeks.	Intensely itchy anal area, especially at night. Disturbed sleep, irritability.	As long as the worms are laying eggs. Eggs remain infective in environment for about 2 weeks.	Treat infected individual. Examine members of family or institution. Reinforce handwashing and personal hygiene. Wash bedding and clothes. Vacuum sleeping and living areas.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Roseola (Sixth Disease)	Spread of <i>human herpes virus 6</i> is not clearly understood. Common in children 6-24 months of age. Incubation period is about 10 days.	Starts with fever. Several days later small red spots appear on face and body. Rash lasts 1-2 days. Occasionally child will have high fever.	Not highly infectious. Difficult to diagnose until rash appears.	Do not exclude unless too ill to participate.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Ringworm	Spread by direct or indirect contact with lesions of infected persons or animals. Incubation period 10-14 days.	One or more circular lesions on skin, scalp or nails. It is slightly raised with red edges and is scaling and itchy. It spreads outward on the skin.	While lesions are visible.	While under treatment, exclude from gymnasiums, swimming pools and activities that may expose others.	Not reportable to Public Health.
Rubella (German Measles)	Virus in respiratory secretions. Spread from person to person, through the air. There is risk of severe damage to fetus if a pregnant woman gets rubella during the first trimester. Incubation period 14-23 days.	Many children infected have no signs of illness or rash. May have mild fever, sore throat, swollen glands in neck and behind the ears. Rash consists of small red spots which start on scalp and face and spread rapidly over entire body.	7 days before until at least 7 days after onset of rash.	Exclude for 7 days after onset of rash. All contacts should be vaccinated or have blood test to prove immunity.	Report to Public Health.