

# Some *infectious diseases* of children

For more information please contact your **local public health unit, community health centre, pharmacist or doctor**

## 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 after the rash first appears and until the blisters have all scabbed over.

### How can I help prevent spread?

Immunisation is available for children over 12 months old. It is recommended for people over 12 years who 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 help 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  
4 to 6 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 noses, 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 headlice management is ongoing.

### How can I help 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 recommended for some people.

## Impetigo (school sores)

Time from exposure to illness  
1 to 3 days.

### Symptoms

Small red spots change into blisters that fill 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 a watertight dressing

### How can I help 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 and headaches.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**

Yes, until they feel better.

**How can I help prevent spread?**

Immunisation, is recommended for the elderly and people with chronic illnesses.

## Measles

---

**Time from exposure to illness**

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 help prevent spread?**

Immunisation (MMR) at 12 months and 4 years. Contacts who are not immune should not attend school or work for 14 days.

## Meningococcal disease

---

**Time from exposure to illness**  
2 to 10 days.

### Symptoms

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

**Do I need to keep my child home?**

Seek medical help immediately.

Patient will need hospital treatment

**How can I help prevent spread?**

Avoid sharing drinks. Close contacts should see their doctor urgently if symptoms develop, and may need to have a special antibiotic.

## 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 help prevent spread?**

Immunisation (MMR) at 12 months and 4 years of age.

## Ringworm

---

**Time from exposure to 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;  
reinfections: 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 treatment has begun.

**How can I help prevent spread?**

Close contacts should be examined for infestation and treat 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 help prevent spread?**

Careful hand washing. Sick contacts should see their doctor.

## Slapped cheek

(Erythema infectiosum, Fifth disease, Parvovirus B19)

---

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

### Symptoms

Mild illness; fever, red cheeks, itchy lace-like rash and possibly cough, sore throat or runny nose. Can cause foetal disease in pregnant women.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**

No, most infectious before the rash appears.

**How can I help prevent spread?**

Careful hand washing; avoid sharing drinks.

## Whooping cough (pertussis)

---

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

### Symptoms

Starts with runny 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, and 18 months and 4 years of age. A special antibiotic can be given for the patient and close contacts. Unimmunised contacts may be excluded from child care until the first 5 days of a special antibiotic has been taken.

## Worms

---

**Time from exposure to illness**  
Several weeks.

### Symptoms

Itchy bottom.

**Do I need to keep my child home?**

No.

**How can I help prevent spread?**

Careful hand washing. Whole household should be treated. Wash linen, towels and clothing worn in the past 2 days in hot water and detergent.