



Infectious diseases

An overview

Some illnesses may be infectious. To prevent these infections spreading to other students, please see your doctor and keep your child at home for the advised time.

Infectious disease	Time from exposure to illness	Symptoms	Do I need to keep my child home?	How can I help prevent spread?
Chicken pox	2 to 3 weeks.	Slight fever, runny nose, and a rash that begins as raised pink spots that blister and scab.	Yes, for 5 days after the rash first appears and until the blisters have all scabbed over.	Immunisation is available for children over 18 months old. It is recommended for people over 12 years who are not immune.
Conjunctivitis	1-3 days.	The eye feels scratchy, is red and may water. Lids may stick together on waking.	Yes, while there is discharge from the eye.	Careful hand washing; avoid sharing towels. Antibiotics may be needed.
Gastroenteritis	Depends on the cause: several hours to several days.	A combination of frequent loose or watery stools, vomiting, fever, stomach cramps, headaches.	Yes, at least for 24 hours after diarrhoea stops.	Careful hand washing with soap and water after using the toilet or handling nappies and before touching food.
German measles (Rubella)	2 to 3 weeks.	Often mild or no symptoms; mild fever, runny nose, swollen nodes, pink blotchy rash that lasts a short time.	Yes, for at least 4 days after the rash appears.	Immunisation (MMR) at 12 months and 4 years of age.
Glandular fever	4 to 6 weeks.	Fever, headache, sore throat, tiredness, swollen nodes.	No, unless sick.	Careful hand washing, avoid sharing drinks, food and utensils and kissing.

Infectious disease	Time from exposure to illness	Symptoms	Do I need to keep my child home?	How can I help prevent spread?
Hand, foot and mouth disease	3 to 7 days.	Mild illness, perhaps with a fever, blisters around the mouth, on the hands and feet	Yes, until the blisters have dried.	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.	Itchy scalp, white specks stuck near the base of the hairs, lice may be found on the scalp.	No, as long as headlice management is ongoing.	Family, friends and classroom contacts should be examined and managed if infested.
Hepatitis A	About 2 to 6 weeks.	Often none in small children; sudden fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), dark urine, pale stools.	Yes, for 2 weeks after first symptoms or 1 week after onset of jaundice.	Careful hand washing; close contacts may need to have an injection of immunoglobulin; immunisation recommended for some people.
Impetigo (school sores)	1 to 3 days.	Small red spots change into blisters that fill with pus and become crusted; usually on the face, hands or scalp.	Yes, until treatment starts. Sores should be covered with a watertight dressing	Careful hand washing.
Influenza	1 to 3 days.	Sudden onset fever, runny nose, sore throat, cough, muscle and headaches.	Yes, until they feel better.	Immunisation, is recommended for the elderly and people with chronic illnesses.
Measles	About 10 to 12 days until first symptoms, and 14 days until the rash develops.	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.	Yes, for at least 4 days after the rash appears	Immunisation (MMR) at 12 months and 4 years. Contacts who are not immune should not attend school or work for 14 days.
Meningococcal Disease	2 to 10 days.	Sudden onset of fever and a combination of headache, neck stiffness, nausea, vomiting, drowsiness and rash.	Seek medical help immediately. Patient will need hospital treatment	Close contacts should see their doctor urgently if symptoms develop, and may need to have a special antibiotic. Immunisation with Meningococcal C vaccine at 12 months of age.
Mumps	14 to 25 days.	Fever, swollen and tender glands around the jaw.	Yes, for 9 days after onset of swelling.	Immunisation (MMR) at 12 months and 4 years of age.
Ringworm	Varies (may be several days).	Small scaly patch on the skin surrounded by a pink ring.	Yes, until the day after fungal treatment has begun.	Careful hand washing.

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Scabies	New infections: 2 to 6 weeks; reinfections: 1 to 4 days.	Itchy skin, worse at night. Worse around wrists, armpits, buttocks, groin and between fingers and toes.	Yes, until the day after treatment has begun.	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	1 to 3 days.	Sudden onset sore throat, high fever and vomiting, followed by a rash in 12 to 36 hours.	Yes, until at least 24 hours of treatment has begun and the child is feeling better.	Careful hand washing. Sick contacts should see their doctor.
Slapped cheek (Erythema infectiosum, Fifth disease, Parvovirus B19)	1 to 2 weeks.	Mild illness; fever, red cheeks, itchy lace-like rash and possibly cough, sore throat or runny nose. Can cause foetal disease in pregnant women.	No, most infectious before the rash appears.	Careful hand washing; avoid sharing drinks.
Whooping cough (pertussis)	7 to 20 days.	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.	Yes, until the first 5 days of a special antibiotic have been taken.	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	Several weeks.	Itchy bottom.	No.	Careful hand washing. Whole household should be treated. Wash linen, towels and clothing worn in the past 2 days in hot water and detergent.

Referenced www.health.nsw.gov.au

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For more information please contact your doctor, local public health unit or community health centre - look under NSW Government at the front of the White Pages.