

# Communicable Diseases

Children are often in close proximity to each other which explains the easy transmission of contagious and communicable diseases.

These diseases include:

- **Chickenpox**
- **Measles (Rubeola)**
- **Mumps**
- **German measles( Rubella)**
- **Scarlet Fever**
- **Lice (Pediculosis)**
- **Fifth Disease**

For the sake of public health, parents are reminded that in case your child comes down with any of these common childhood diseases, the child should not attend school.

The IC Health Center provides information and help for parents via telephone or e-mail communication.

## Chickenpox

### **Definition:**

Chickenpox is a common illness in children; it is caused by the varicella-zoster virus.

Chickenpox causes a scratchy skin rash and red acne all over the body.

This virus can spread easily; it can be transmitted by air droplets from an infected person who sneezes or coughs, or by sharing contaminated foods or drinks.

### **Signs & Symptoms:**

- Skin rash or vesicles (fluid-filled blisters)
- Fatigue and weakness
- Fever
- Decreased appetite
- Headache
- Sore throat

**Disease transmission:**

- After you have been exposed to someone who has the chickenpox virus, the symptoms need 15 to 16 days to appear (the incubation period).
- Chickenpox takes 1 to 2 days to go through all its stages. New red spots will be seen every day for up to one week.
- The virus can be spread before any symptoms appear.
- The child is infectious and can spread the disease to others from 2 to 3 days before the rash appears until all eruptions have scabbed over.
- If a person has never had the disease in childhood or never taken the chickenpox vaccine, then he/she will be at risk of getting the virus at any age.

**Treatment:**

- Hygiene measures are very important in the treatment of chickenpox.
- Bath frequently with soap and water.
- Change clothes and linen on a daily basis.
- Apply medication prescribed by doctor like calamine lotion to reduce itching.
- A Child with chickenpox should remain home until all eruptions have scabbed over or until the physician validates it.

**Measles****Definition:**

Measles is respiratory system infection caused by Morbillivirus and is also known as Rubeola disease.

**Signs & Symptoms:**

- High Fever
- Runny nose
- Cough
- Eye redness
- Skin rash and eruption

**Disease transmission:**

- Measles is transmitted via respiration and is extremely infectious for people lacking immunity or in close contact with the infected individual.
- The incubation period of measles infection is about 14 days.

**Treatment:**

- Rest, analgesics and good hydration helps a lot in the treatment of measles.
- Contact us immediately if you need help or a doctor's advice.

## **Mumps**

**Definition:**

Mumps is a virus that enters the body via the respiratory system

Symptoms begin when the virus develops and reaches the brain to the glands regularly the salivary ones and to many other parts of the body

**Signs &Symptoms:**

- Fatigue
- Pain and swelling of the salivary glands
- Swelling of the cheeks
- Fever
- Headache
- Earache, sore throat
- Pain when opening the mouth (eating, chewing or drinking)
- Loss of appetite
- Vomiting

**Disease transmission:**

- The virus can be transmitted 1 to 2 days before symptoms appear and 5 to 10 days after that.
- The incubation period is 15 to 17 days until the first symptoms of the mumps virus appears; however the person is considered having the infection.
- The virus is spread by airborne droplets.

**Treatment:**

- Bed rest, analgesics and good hydration helps a lot.
- Contact us immediately if you need help or a doctor's advice.

## **Rubella**

**Definition:**

Rubella is a contagious infection that mainly involves the skin and lymph nodes.

Rubella is known also as German measles.

**Disease transmission:**

Rubella is transmitted through air droplets from the cough or sneezes of an infected person

**Signs & Symptoms:**

- Mild fever
- Soft lymph nodes, mainly behind the neck and at the back of the ears
- Face and neck rash that spreads quickly to the abdomen, back and extremities. It lasts for about 4 to 5 days.
- Runny nose
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Pain and swelling in the extremities
- Headache
- Decreased appetite
- Conjunctivitis

**Disease transmission:**

- Rubella transmission occurs through coughing or sneezing.
- The incubation period is the time between Rubella transmission and the start of symptoms. It lasts between 14 and 21 days.

**Treatment:**

- Treatment generally consists of rest, fluids, and relief of the symptoms.

All parents are urged to vaccinate their children with MMR vaccine or Rubella vaccine.

## **LICE (Pediculosis)**

### **Definition:**

Lice are scrounging pests that can live in the hair or on the body.

### **Types:**

There are three types:

- Pediculus humanus corporis (body louse, clothes louse)
- Pediculus humanus capitis (head louse)
- Pthirus pubis ("crab" louse, pubic louse)

### **Signs &Symptoms:**

- Scratching of the affected area.

### **Disease transmission:**

- Head lice move slowly on the head and neck and fix their eggs in the hair.
- Lice cannot jump or fly, they move by crawling.
- Head lice are transmitted through close contact or sharing the comb, brush or other hair items of an infected person.
- The transmission of human lice is not related to pets (dogs or cats).

### **Treatment:**

- There is Medication head lice treatment; it's a shampoo.
- Parents are asked to examine their child's head, especially behind the ears and at the neck.
- If lice are found, all house members should be examined for nits and lice.
- Persons with live (crawling) lice or nits of the scalp should be treated.
- To eliminate head lice, it is very important that all treatment instructions and steps are carefully followed and completed.
- Apply lice medicine or shampoo, also called pediculicide according to the instructions written on the medication pamphlet. People with long hair it may need two bottles.
- Check towels, hats, pillows and coats for any lice.

- Clean bedding, clothing, carpeting and mattresses because lice may survive for up to 48 hours off the human body; However Nits can survive up to 10 days.
- Parents should notify the nurse at their child's school so that the classroom and any sibling's classrooms can be checked and steps can be made to prevent further spread.

## Whooping Cough or (Pertussis)

### **Definition:**

Whooping cough is an extremely contagious respiratory disease. It is also called Pertussis and is caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*.

Pertussis can be a deadly illness for babies younger than 1 year; it influences mostly young children.

### **Signs & Symptoms:**

- Violent cough which often makes breathing difficult.

### **Preventive measures:**

- The best way to protect against pertussis is immunization.
- The vaccine is called DTaP (combination of vaccine that prevents three diseases: diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) and is accessible for children and adults.
- The pertussis booster vaccine for adolescents and adults is Tdap.
- Children need five DTaP vaccines:  
The first three doses are given at 2, 4, and 6 months. The fourth one is given between 15 and 18 months, and the last one is given at 4–6 years.
- Prevention is essential. Parents are urged to protect their children by keeping them away from anyone who has cough or cold symptoms.

## Fifth Disease

### **Definition:**

- It is a rash like disease in children and is caused by human parvovirus B19.
- Parvovirus B19 can be in the respiratory secretions such as saliva or nasal mucus of contaminated persons who appear to have a normal cold, but in fact, they have the infection.

### **Signs & Symptoms:**

- Cheek rash and inflammation
- Eruptions on the face , chest and extremities
- Itching reaction
- Mild fever

- Weakness/fatigue
- Joint pain and swelling

**Disease transmission:**

- Fifth Disease is transmitted by air-borne droplets or direct contact with the respiratory secretions of infected persons.
- Fifth Disease is infectious and is contagious before the rash appears. The transmission starts with the beginning of the sickness.

**Treatment:**

- Treat the symptoms; if there is fever, you give antipyretics, if there is pain; you give analgesics, etc...
- Rest and restriction of physical activities
- Good hydration
- Hospitalization and blood transfusion may be needed for anemia caused by parvovirus B19 disease.
- People who have immunity problems and contact fifth disease should seek medical help.