



Common Infectious Diseases in Preschoolers

General guidelines. For more information, talk to your healthcare provider.

Disease	Description/Symptoms	Incubation Period*	Infectious Period**	Prevention and Control
Chickenpox (Varicella)	Caused by a virus. Sudden fever, tiredness, skin rash. Rash begins as a small blister. Leaves a scab in 3-4 days.	11-20 days	Up to 5 days before rash appears until all skin lesions have crusted (usually 5-7 days).	Spread by direct contact with blisters, sneezing or coughing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolate children until lesions have crusted (5-6 days after first outbreak). People who have not had chickenpox should be considered infectious from 10-21 days following exposure. Vaccine available.
Cytomegalovirus (CMV)	Caused by a virus. Often no symptoms. Most severe form occurs in fetuses and newborn babies. Very common in childcare settings.	Not known for certain. Possibly 3-12 weeks after exposure.	As long as virus is present in urine or saliva. Possibly months or years.	Spread by contact with infectious body fluids. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use proper handwashing to eliminate need for long-term exclusion from school.
Fifth Disease (Parvovirus)	Common, mild viral illness. Bright red rash on cheeks. May spread to arms, legs and chest. Rash may get brighter if the body is warm. Fever in 15-30% of patients. Sometimes causes achy joints.	4-20 days	1-3 days prior to onset of rash.	Primarily spread through drainage from nose and throat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use proper handwashing.
Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease	Viral illness. Fever, sore throat, sores inside the mouth, and a rash that may appear on the hands, feet, buttocks or face. This is not a disease that affects cattle. Generally not a serious illness. Most adults are probably immune.	2-5 days	During the symptoms and for several weeks after. No need to exclude child from daycare unless too sick to participate. Exclusion will not stop spread of illness.	Spread through contact with secretions from nose and throat, and from stool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash hands after handling body secretions. Cover nose and mouth when sneezing.
Impetigo	Bacterial skin infection with honey-crusted sores around mouth, nose, arms or legs.	5-10 days; longer in some cases.	Until sores are completely healed or until treated with antibiotics for at least 24 hours.	Spread by contact with infected person (who may or may not have lesions). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclude child from child care or school for at least 24 hours after appropriate therapy and child has no fever.
Meningitis Reportable to Community Epidemiology at (619) 515-6620.	Inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord. Often caused by bacteria or viruses. High fever and chills, stiff neck, headache, vomiting and sometimes rash, coma and seizures.	Varies according to cause.	Varies according to cause.	Spread by contact with discharge from nose and mouth or by coughing and sneezing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use proper handwashing practices. Avoid sharing cups and tissues. Essential to see a health care provider for treatment. Vaccines available: HIB for haemophilus B meningitis; PCV 7 for pneumococcal meningitis; and MPSV 4 for meningococcal meningitis.

* Incubation Period: When illness occurs after being exposed.

** Infectious Period: How long illness can be spread.

Common Infectious Diseases in Preschoolers (continued)

Disease	Description/Symptoms	Incubation Period*	Infectious Period**	Prevention and Control
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)	Caused by a bacteria. Cold-like symptoms for 1-2 weeks with a cough gradually becoming more severe. Spasms of cough with vomiting after coughing spells. Cough spells can last for 1-6 weeks or longer.	Usually 7 - 10 days, rarely as long as 42 days.	For approx. 4 - 5 weeks, during initial cold-like symptoms and up to 3 weeks after coughing spells began.	Easily spread by coughing, sneezing or close contact. Wash hands and cover coughs and sneezes. Appropriately dispose of used tissues. Non-infectious after 5 days of appropriate antibiotic. Vaccine available.
Pinkeye	Common infection caused by bacteria or virus. Irritated, watery eyes, swollen lids and a clear or yellow discharge that makes eyelashes sticky. One or both eyes may be affected.	Viral: 12 hours-12 days Bacterial: 24-72 hours	Viral: while symptoms are present. Bacterial: until 24 hours after effective treatment has begun.	Spread by contact with discharge or with fingers or contaminated objects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid touching eyes. • Use proper handwashing.
Pinworms	Caused by small worm in the intestine. Signs include bottom itching (rectal), especially at night.	2-6 weeks	Usually about 2 weeks.	Spread by transfer of pinworm eggs from rectum to mouth of another person; also by contact with objects contaminated with eggs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash hands, bedclothes and toys. • See health care provider about treating exposed persons.
Ringworm	Caused by a fungus, not a worm. Signs include small, reddish, scaly circles on body or scalp that may spread. On scalp may cause hair loss and mild to severe redness and scaling.	4-10 days	While lesions are present.	Spread by direct contact with infected humans, animals or soil, or indirectly by contact with contaminated combs, brushes, headgear, towels, bedding or clothing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply antifungal medicine to affected area and keep covered. (Some medicines are in drug stores without a prescription—ask a pharmacist.)
Roseola	Viral illness occurring most often in spring and fall. Abrupt onset of high fever for 3-7 days. The fever abates followed by the appearance of a rose-colored rash on the chest, abdomen, face and extremities that lasts from a few hours to 48 hours.	5-15 days	Unknown.	No effective way to prevent. Exclude child while fever present but not necessary during the rash stage. Careful handwashing.
Scarlet Fever	Caused by bacteria. “Sandpaper” rash, bright red tongue and red, swollen lips.	1-3 days	Usually until person has been treated with antibiotics for 24 hours.	Spread through contact with discharge from nose and mouth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use proper handwashing. • Treated with antibiotics.
Strep Throat	Caused by bacteria. Infection with sore throat and fever.	1-3 days	Usually until person has been treated with antibiotics for 24 hours.	Spread the same way as scarlet fever. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use proper handwashing. • Treated with antibiotics.

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