



HOSPICE OF THE WESTERN RESERVE

# Pediatric Caregiver Training Guide

Caring for the Physical and Emotional Needs of You and Your Child

**SECTION 4:  
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**



# Communicable Diseases in the Home

**A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE IS ANY DISEASE THAT CAN BE SPREAD FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER.** Common communicable diseases are influenza (the flu), chicken pox, pink eye and lice. They can be spread person to person, or by contact with a contaminated object. An ill child may be more likely to contract a communicable disease due to a compromised immune system. Other factors such as age, nutritional status and current state of health can make a person more susceptible. These diseases, while not serious for a healthy child, can be serious for an ill child. Frequent hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Immunizations are available for many of the diseases.

## Common Communicable Diseases

DISEASE	SYMPTOMS	INCUBATION PERIOD	HOW IT'S SPREAD	HOW YOU CAN CONTROL IT	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Chicken Pox	Blister-like rash; progresses to scabs; low fever; weak and tired	11–20 days	Direct contact with an infected person; spread by droplets or airborne from an infected person's nose or throat; discharge from the person's blisters (the scabs are not contagious)	Isolate infected person until all the blisters are scabbed over  VACCINE AVAILABLE (Varicella)	Live vaccine—see Immunization section
Measles (Rubeola)	Fever, runny nose and eyes, cough and eyes sensitive to light; dark red raised blotchy rash that starts on the face on day 3–7	12–17 days	Direct contact with an infected person's nose or throat secretions; germs can live in the air up to two or more hours	IMMUNIZATION REQUIRED (MMR)  Keep away from others for 7–9 days after the rash first appears	Seldom seen anymore because of vaccines; outbreaks would be well-publicized; frequently confused with roseola and other rashes
Common Cold	Sore throat, watery eyes and nose; sneezing, general aches and chills	12–72 hours	Direct contact with an infected person's respiratory droplets or articles with nose/throat discharges	ANTIBIOTICS ARE INEFFECTIVE	WASH HANDS after ALL contact with nasal discharge and sneezing
Mumps	Fever followed by painful, swollen glands under the jaw or in front of the ear on one or both sides; may also have stomach pain and headache	12–25 days	Contact with an infected person's saliva and by droplets from their saliva	IMMUNIZATION REQUIRED (MMR) Keep away from others for at least nine days after swelling begins	Seldom seen anymore because of vaccines; Strep throat or mono can cause very swollen glands
German Measles	Rash, low fever, headache, sore throat, cough, swollen glands	12–23 days	Direct contact with droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person	IMMUNIZATION REQUIRED  Keep away from others for at least 4 days after rash appears	Dangerous to unborn child if contracted by pregnant woman; routine screening during pregnancy

# Common Communicable Diseases

DISEASE	SYMPTOMS	INCUBATION PERIOD	HOW IT'S SPREAD	HOW YOU CAN CONTROL IT	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Pink-Eye (Conjunctivitis)	Redness of eye(s) and swelling of eyelid, tearing, burning, itching, thick colored discharge, may be sensitive to light	24-72 hours	Direct contact with an infected person's discharge or direct contact with articles or fingers contaminated with discharge	Keep away from others until treatment has started and redness decreased	Spreads very rapidly through families; throw away all eye makeup and clean contact lenses if used
Flu	Sudden onset of fever, chills, headache and sore muscles; runny nose, sore throat and cough	1-3 days	Contact with respiratory droplets from an infected person or with articles soiled with nose and throat discharges	Keep away from others until fever and other symptoms improved	IMMUNIZATION AVAILABLE  You CANNOT get the flu from the shot; vaccines do not contain live virus
Impetigo	Blistered, pus-filled bumps that progress to yellowish crusted, painless sores; itching	2-10 days	Contact with draining sores or articles soiled by discharge from an infected person	Keep away from others until 24 hours after treatment completed and sores are healed	Spreads very rapidly; common sites are around the nose and mouth
Head Lice	Itching and irritation of the scalp with small light gray insects and/or white eggs (nits) that are attached to the base of hairs and are not easily removed; check behind the ears and the neck	7-10 days	Contact with an infected person and their personal belongings such as hats, combs and brushes	Keep away from others until scalp has been treated with medicated shampoo and the person is nit-free	All personal items such as combs, brushes, bedding, stuffed animals etc., should be cleaned at the same time as the head; family and friends should be examined and treated as needed
Scabies	Small raised areas of skin containing fluid or tiny burrows under the skin resembling a line; often between fingers, underside of wrists, arms, belt lines; itching is intense, especially at night	2-6 weeks	Direct skin-to-skin contact with an infected person	Keep away from others until infected person and the house has been treated; this problem frequently returns after the first treatment is completed and needs to be repeated	



## Common Communicable Diseases

DISEASE	SYMPTOMS	INCUBATION PERIOD	HOW IT'S SPREAD	HOW YOU CAN CONTROL IT	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Fungal Infections	<b>Ringworm of the Scalp</b> Round, crusty scaly patches; Hair may break off	10-14 days	Contact with an infected person, animal, or personal articles that have been in contact with infected lesions	Personal cleanliness	Household contacts and animals should be examined and treated as needed
	<b>Ringworm of the Skin</b> Flat, inflamed ring-like crusty scores that may itch or burn	4-10 days	Contact with an infected person, animal, or personal articles that have been in contact with infected lesions	Medical treatment with anti-fungal medication	
	<b>Ringworm of the Feet</b> Itching and cracking of the skin, especially between the toes	Unknown	Contact with an infected person, animal, or personal articles that have been in contact with infected lesions	Wear shower shoes in public places	Athlete's foot can be contracted at public pools, gym showers, etc.
Strep Throat	Sudden onset of fever, sore and red throat, white spots on the back of the throat, tender and swollen glands on neck	1-3 days	Contact with respiratory droplets or contact with an infected person	Keep away from others until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has started; change the child's toothbrush 24 hours after treatment started	Always give correct amount of medication as often and for the entire length of time it is prescribed
Scarlet Fever	Same symptoms as Strep throat; also a tongue coated with little white dots and a rash that is sand-paper like, especially on the abdomen; high fever; possible nausea and vomiting	1-3 days	Contact with respiratory droplets or contact with an infected person. Scarlet fever is accompanied by Strep	Keep away from others until 24 hours after antibiotics are started; change the child's toothbrush 24 hours after treatment started	Always give correct amount of medication as often and for the entire length of time it is prescribed