

## Tip Sheets

### Preventing the Spread of Communicable Illness

A communicable illness—also known as an infectious or transmissible disease—is one that is spread from one person (the source of infection) to another (the host). Infections may range in severity from asymptomatic to severe and fatal; and a person may not exhibit any signs of the illness, but still be able to spread the viruses.

#### Common Ways Germs are Spread

##### Direct contact by touching infectious material

Young children frequently touch their surroundings and other people, easily spreading infections from their nose, mouth, or eyes to hands to others. Simply washing your hands can help prevent such illnesses as the common cold or eye infections.

##### Respiratory droplets in the air that are breathed in

Droplets can also land on hands or objects and are then touched, mouthed, or eaten. When germs in infected droplets come in contact with the moist linings of the nose, eyes, and mouth of an uninfected person, they can cause illness.

##### Hands to food and/or food to hands

Germs can be transmitted by a food preparer to those eating the food if the preparer does not properly wash their hands after handling raw food or using the toilet. Prevent foodborne illness by excluding ill foodservice workers, washing hands after using the toilet or handling raw food, and properly storing, preparing, and cooking food and beverages.

##### Fecal-oral transmission

Germs may be passed from an infected person's stool to another person's hands and mouth. For

example, from a child with diarrhea to the hands of the caregiver during diaper changing; then spreading if the caregiver doesn't immediately wash their hands.

##### Through blood and bodily fluids

Germs are spread when blood from a person with an infection gets into the bloodstream of an uninfected person. This can also occur when infected blood or body fluids come in contact with skin that has open cuts or sores.

##### Animals to people

Wash your hands after petting animals or touching any surfaces they come into contact with.

#### Stopping the Spread

Some germs can survive on surfaces from hours to weeks. Help stop the spread of communicable illness in a child care setting:

1. **At the source** by identifying, treating, and isolating the sick person. This is achieved by:
  - Conducting morning health checks.
  - Excluding ill individuals.
  - Referring those who are sick to their health care provider when necessary.
2. **At the route of transmission** by:
  - Following proper cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting guidelines.
  - Using correct diapering procedures.
  - Practicing proper handwashing.
3. **By protecting the host** through promoting their immune system with:
  - Routine immunizations.
  - Proper nutrition, exercise, and sleep.

## Reducing the Spread through Direct Contact

- Each child should have their own crib/cot and blankets, which should be stored individually.
- Children should not share personal items such as combs, brushes, blankets, hats, or clothing.
- Place children's soiled clothing in a tied plastic bag and send home for laundering.
- Cover open cuts and sores with a waterproof bandage.
- Dispose of used tissues and paper towels in a lined, covered, and foot-operated trash can.
- Follow approved procedures for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting.
- Establish and maintain illness exclusions.

## Reducing the Spread of Respiratory Illnesses

- Teach children and staff to cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue or elbow/sleeve, properly dispose of the tissue, and wash their hands.
- Ensure that staff and children wash their hands:
  - After wiping or blowing noses.
  - After contact with nose or mouth.
  - Before preparing or eating food.
- Don't share food, drink, or eating utensils.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys regularly.
- Clean eating utensils using a dishwasher or the three-step method: wash in soapy water, rinse with plain water, and sanitize (then air dry).
- Give children hugs instead of a kiss.

## Reducing the Spread of Fecal-Oral Infections

Because not all children or staff with a diarrheal illness show symptoms, it is important to have standard program precautions in place, such as:

- Strict enforcement of hand washing policies.
- Strict cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting policies with a focus on diapering, toileting, and food preparation areas.
- Enforcement of exclusion guidelines:

- Children/staff may return after applicable treatment AND when diarrhea has completely stopped for at least 24 hours.
- Children should not return if there is a risk stool can leak from their diaper.

## Reducing the Spread of Diseases through Contact with Blood and Other Body Fluids

- Practice universal precautions/OSHA guidelines (approach all blood/body fluids as if infectious).
- Use proper handwashing procedures after contact.
- Wear disposable gloves when touching blood, body fluids, or contaminated objects/surfaces.
- Place disposable gloves in every classroom, bathroom, diapering area, and first aid kit.

## Additional Resources

Hennepin County Infectious Diseases in Childcare Settings and Schools Manual  
[www.hennepin.us/childcaremanual#Sec1](http://www.hennepin.us/childcaremanual#Sec1)

National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs  
<https://nrckids.org/files/CFOC4%20pdf-%20FINAL.pdf>

For more information, visit [www.inclusivechildcare.org](http://www.inclusivechildcare.org).

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