

Guide to Common Childhood Infections

The quick reference guide is for information only. Diagnosis of an infection must be made by a health care provider.

A “star image” ★ beside a disease in the quick reference guide indicates that the disease is of public health significance and must be reported to Public Health. To notify Peterborough Public Health of a reportable disease, please call:

- During business hours (Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) **Phone:** 705-743-1000, ext. 511 **Fax:** 705-743-2897
- Outside of business hours (Including weekends and holidays) **Phone:** 705-760-8127

Schools should follow their school board policies and processes for disease/illness reporting even for those not listed as reportable to public health.

A list of all reportable diseases is available at [Peterborough Public Health Diseases of Public Health Significance](#).

Illness	How it Spreads	How to Recognize	When is it Contagious	When to Report/Exclude
★ Chickenpox (Varicella)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact with blister fluid or saliva of an infected person • Can also spread through the air; enters the body through the nose or mouth • A pregnant woman can pass it on to her baby before birth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild fever and itchy red rash which turns into fluid filled blisters and crust over • Usually a full body rash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually, 1-2 days before rash starts until all blisters have crusted over; generally, 5 days from rash onset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting required next business day (only the name and age of the child is requested) • Do not exclude unless too ill to take part in activities • Notify all parents and staff immediately
★ Diarrhea and Vomiting (Gastroenteritis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact with stool or vomit of an infected person • Contact with surfaces/food that have become contaminated (usually by unclean hands) • Through eating/drinking contaminated food or water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomiting, diarrhea (unformed or watery stool), fever, loss of appetite, stomach pain, fatigue, headache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While diarrhea and/or vomiting are present and up to 48 hours after symptoms have stopped • Depending on the cause, bacteria/virus may remain in stool for a few weeks after illness 	<p>CHILD CARE CENTRES: Report outbreaks* (see definition at bottom of chart) to PPH immediately</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclude until symptom free for at least 48 hours <p>SCHOOLS: Do not report unless there is a sudden or unusual increase in absenteeism due to similar symptoms in students/staff in a class or school in the same day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclude until symptom free for at least 48 hours
Ear Infections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually follows a cold (viral upper respiratory infection) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If related to a cold, may have runny nose, cough, sneezing, or fever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not usually contagious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not report • Do not exclude unless too ill to take part in activities

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes germs travel from the throat to the ear through a damaged Eustachian tube (connects the ear to the throat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints of painful ear, tugging on the ear, trouble hearing quiet sounds and irritability (especially infants) 		
Fifth Disease (Parvovirus B19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with nose or throat secretions of an infected person (i.e., sneezing) Can spread from a pregnant woman to her unborn child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low grade fever, headache and mild cold like symptoms (i.e., runny nose) Starts with a very red rash on the cheeks followed by a lace-like rash on the torso and arms, then over the rest of the body 1-4 days later The rash may be itchy and come and go for 1-3 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most contagious several days before onset of rash. Once the rash develops the person is no longer contagious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report Do not exclude unless too ill to take part in activities Notify all parents and staff May affect fetus; pregnant contacts should consult health care practitioner promptly
★ Flu (Influenza)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with secretions from the nose or mouth of an infected person (i.e., sneezing, coughing) Contact with objects (i.e., surfaces, toys, doorknobs) that have been exposed to droplets from an infected person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever, headache, fatigue, chills, muscle soreness, cough, and sore throat Children may also have upset stomach, vomiting and diarrhea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 hours before start of symptoms and up to 7 days after symptoms develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting required next business day Exclude until fever is absent for at least 24 hours (with no over-the-counter medications) and the child feels well enough to participate in regular activities <p>SCHOOLS: While influenza diagnosed by a health care practitioner is a reportable disease, schools do not have to report flu-like illnesses unless there is a sudden or unusual increase in absenteeism due to similar symptoms in students/staff in a class or school in the same day</p>
Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (Coxsackie Virus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with an infected person's saliva, stool or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever, headache, sore throat, small painful ulcers in the mouth, loss of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most contagious during the first week of illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report Exclude until feeling well, have been without fever for 24 hrs, without

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	fluid from the blisters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The virus may remain in the stool up to 4 weeks after the illness started 	appetite, lack of energy, vomiting and/or diarrhea and a skin rash <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skin rash looks like red spots, often with small blisters on top, appear on the hands and feet and sometimes elsewhere on the body Symptoms usually last 7-10 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The virus may remain in the stool up to 4 weeks after the illness started 	gastrointestinal (nausea/vomiting/diarrhea) symptoms for 48hrs, and there are no open blisters on the skin or the mouth
Head Lice (Pediculosis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hair-to-hair contact with someone who has head lice Contact with personal items from someone who has head lice (i.e., clothing, hats or hairbrushes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Itchy scalp Small red lesions on head Presence of lice or nits (the eggs of mature lice) on the head, behind the ears, or on the back of the neck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transmissible as long as lice and nits are present in the hair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report No exclusion required
Impetigo <i>Caused by Group A Streptococcus or Staphylococcus aureus bacteria.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct contact: when someone touches an impetigo rash Indirect contact: germs can get on bed sheets, towels, clothing etc. that have been in contact with one's skin. If another person touches these objects germs can spread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rash starts as a cluster of red bumps. Eventually blisters may ooze or be covered with a honey-coloured crust Rash usually begins to appear around mouth, nose or skin that is not covered by clothes More serious infection may include fever, pain, swelling and feeling weak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the onset of rash until 24 hours after the start of antibiotics if <i>Group A Streptococcus</i>, or until blisters have dried up if <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report For <i>Group A Streptococcus</i> infection, exclude until 24 hours of appropriate antibiotic treatment received and well enough to take part in activities For <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> exclude if draining lesions cannot be kept covered
★ Measles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with secretions from the nose or mouth of an infected person Can also be spread through the air (i.e., coughing, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever, runny nose, cough, drowsiness, irritability, red eyes, small white spots on the inside of the mouth and throat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly contagious for 4 days before and up to 4 days after rash begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting required immediately Exclusion required for case and contacts and will be determined by PPH

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	sneezing) or contamination of surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A blotchy red rash appears on the face 3-7 days after initial symptoms and spreads down the body 		
★ Meningitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacterial: direct contact with secretions from nose or throat of an infected person (i.e. sharing toothbrushes, drinks) Viral: germs in stool (poop) of an infected person can spread to another person's mouth through unclean hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever, fatigue, headache, drowsiness, reduced consciousness, vomiting, stiff neck, pain when moving head or neck, joint pain, skin rash, seizures In infants, irritability, refusing meals, constant crying, unusual sleep patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacterial: 7 days before symptoms begin to 24 hours after the start of appropriate antibiotics Viral: period of contagiousness depends on the affecting virus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting required immediately Bacterial: exclude for at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotics Viral: Exclusion may depend on the virus that is identified; consult with PPH
Mononucleosis (Mono)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person-to-person through contact with secretions (i.e., kissing, sneezing) or indirectly through surfaces contaminated with saliva (i.e., sharing drinks) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever, sore throat, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes, enlarged spleen, jaundice 50% of people have no symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not highly contagious; can be infectious for a year or longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report No exclusion required; consult physician about avoiding contact sports until fully recovered
★ Mumps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with secretions from the nose or mouth of an infected person Can also be spread through respiratory droplets (i.e., coughing, sneezing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever, swollen salivary glands at the jaw line on one or both sides of the face, headache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 days before and up to 5 days after onset of swollen glands or symptom onset if swollen glands are not present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting required next business day Exclude for 5 days after onset of swollen glands or symptom onset if swollen glands are not present
Pink Eye - Bacterial (conjunctivitis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with eye secretions through contaminated fingers or objects (i.e., cloths or towels) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pinkness or redness in whites of eye(s) Irritated/scratchy feeling in eye(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Until 24 hours of treatment is completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report Exclude until consult with healthcare provider Exclude until 24hrs after start of appropriate treatment

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When occurring with a cold, the droplets from a cough or sneeze can spread pink eye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eyelid(s) may be swollen Discharge from eye(s) Eyelid(s) may stick together 		
Pinkeye – Viral (conjunctivitis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For duration of infection, as long as discharge present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report Exclusion not required if no eye discharge. Otherwise, children can return upon approval by health care professional.
Pinworms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with contaminated fingers or objects (i.e., clothing, toys) Reinfection can occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small, white, threadlike worms that live in intestines and crawl out of anus at night to lay eggs on skin Severe itching around anus at night may cause sleeplessness and irritability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Until treatment is complete Eggs are infective outside the body for 2-3 weeks indoors Treating all household members and close contacts may be needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report No exclusion required if individual feels well enough to participate
Ringworm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with contaminated fingers, objects/surfaces (combs, clothing, showers and pool surfaces) or infected animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ring shaped raised rash on scalp, body, groin (jock itch) or feet (athletes' foot) Can be itchy, red and cause hair loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transmissible as long as rash is untreated and/or uncovered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report Exclude until treatment has started
★ Rubella (German measles)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with secretions from the nose or mouth of an infected person (Contact and droplet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild fever, headache, fatigue, runny nose, red eyes, rash (small red spots), swollen lymph nodes in neck Rash usually lasts 3 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 days before and 7 days after onset of rash Incubation period 14-21 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting required immediately, Rubella exposure is a medical emergency Notify all parents and staff immediately Exclude for 7 days after rash begins May affect fetus; pregnant contacts should consult health care practitioner promptly
Scabies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prolonged close contact with skin (i.e., sharing clothing, towels or bedding) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Itchy small red rash, raised spots that usually appear on fingers, toes, wrists, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Until mites and eggs are destroyed by treatment Occasionally, may need two 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report Exclude until after first treatment has been applied

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mites can live off human skin for three days It takes 2-6 weeks after initial contact with scabies with, and 1-4 days if previously exposed for symptoms to appear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elbows and armpits. Rash is caused by insects (mites) that burrow into skin Itching is often worse at night 	treatments a week apart	
Strep throat/Scarlet Fever (Group A streptococcus bacteria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with infected persons saliva, nose or sore on the skin Droplets from cough or sneeze Usually takes 1-3 days after exposure to become ill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever, very sore throat, trouble swallowing, swollen glands, headache, nausea, sore stomach Scarlet fever will have red, sunburn like rash covering the entire body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Until 24 hours after treatment is initiated If untreated, contagious for 1-3 weeks after symptoms start 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not report Exclude for 24hrs after start of antibiotic and no fever
«Whooping cough (Pertussis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with secretions from nose or mouth of infected person (coughing, sneezing) Symptoms usually start 5-10 days after exposure but can take up to 3 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starts with cold symptoms, very runny nose, coughing, mild fever After a week progresses to severe coughing, which may be followed by “whoop” sound during inhalation, difficulty breathing or vomiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If untreated, Infectious for first three weeks Infectious for 5 days after the start of treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting required next business day Notify all parents and staff immediately Exclusion generally not recommended unless in high-risk situation. PPH to provide guidance.

****Identifying an Outbreak**

Symptoms of gastrointestinal illness may include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever.

A case (child or staff) of gastrointestinal illness can be defined as:

- **Two or more** episodes of diarrhea (i.e., loose/watery bowel movements) within a 24-hour period, OR
- **Two or more** episodes of vomiting within a 24-hour period, OR
- **One or more** episodes of diarrhea **AND one or more** episodes of vomiting within a 24-hour period

An outbreak of gastroenteritis is defined as: Two or more individuals (children or staff) who have symptoms that meet the case definition above, in the same room within 48-hour period.

Handwashing and Alcohol-Based Hand Rub

The best way to remove all forms of germs is by washing your hands with soap and water. Handwashing is best practice and should always be used in the following situations:

- If your hands are visibly soiled
- **Before, during** and **after** food preparation
- **Before** eating
- **Before** and **after** taking care of someone who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- **Before** and **after** treating a cut/ open sore
- **Before** and **after** touching eyes and nose
- **After** sneezing, coughing and blowing your nose
- **After** using the washroom
- **After** changing a diaper
- **After** touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- **After** handling pet food or pet treats
- **After** touching garbage

You can find a poster here with [the six steps of proper handwashing](#).

Alcohol-based hand rub is a good alternative for when soap and water are not available and can be used when your hands are visibly clean. The alcohol content should be 70-90% and you should always use enough product to cover all surfaces of your hand and fingers and rub for 20 seconds.

You can find a poster here with the [four steps of using alcohol-based hand rub](#).

References:

- [Caring for Kids](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care](#)
- [OPHS: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability Infectious Disease Protocol](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control in Child Care Centres Requirements and Best Practices](#)