

9. Communicable Diseases

Reporting Communicable Diseases 9.1

Communicable Disease Facts

Information on these pages is intended for use by school staff to better understand common communicable diseases and their transmission.

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Reporting Communicable Diseases

Notifiable Diseases

For information on communicable diseases, contact the Nurse Specialist, Communicable Diseases, at your nearest Public Health Centre.

The following diseases *MUST* be reported to the Public Health Authority under the Public Health Act. This list includes only notifiable diseases that may be seen in schools.

- Chickenpox (Varicella)
- Diphtheria
- Encephalitis
- Gastrointestinal Infections (diarrhea), examples: Giardiasis, Salmonella, Shigella
- Hemophilus Influenza Infections
- Hepatitis
- Measles (Rubeola)
- Meningitis
- Mumps
- Polio
- Reye's Syndrome (Reportable due to viral disease association)
- Rubella (German Measles)
- Tuberculosis
- Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

To Report a Disease:

Call your nearest Public Health Centre with the following information:

- Name of child, address, postal code and phone number.
- Sex of child
- Date of birth (age)
- Name of parent or guardian and work phone number, if applicable

If you are not sure about reporting a disease call a Community Health Nurse at your nearest Public Health Centre.

Other Communicable Diseases

To assist us in tracking other communicable diseases, please report cases of scabies, head lice, ringworm and influenza (flu) to your Public Health Centre.

Communicable Disease Facts

Chickenpox (Varicella)

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a very common childhood disease. It is caused by a virus.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Chickenpox?

- A person who has never had chickenpox may develop the disease two to three weeks (usually 13 to 17 days) after contact with someone who has the virus.
- A person with chickenpox may have a fever and feel unwell for a day or two before the rash appears.
- The rash usually starts as **red spots** on the head, neck and body. New spots continue to appear over the next five days.
- Spots soon become blisters that are filled with fluid. Within days, the blisters will dry up and form scabs.
- The rash can be very itchy which can make children cranky and restless.
- Most children usually have a mild illness, however adults can be very sick.

How is Chickenpox spread?

Chickenpox is spread through the air when someone with chickenpox coughs, sneezes or breathes. It can also be spread by touching the fluid from a chickenpox blister.

Is Chickenpox Infectious?

Persons with chickenpox are infectious from one to two days before and up to five days after the onset of the rash.

When is exclusion necessary?

In most situations, exclusion is not necessary as transmission of chickenpox has likely occurred before the rash develops.

Children with mild illness should be permitted to return to school when they feel well enough to participate in all activities, regardless of the state of the rash.

Children with chickenpox should be excluded as not to expose other groups (e.g. at a swimming pool) during the early stages of the rash, as they are still potentially infectious until the 6th day of the rash or until all the lesions are crusted over.

A person with chickenpox **should not travel** by public transportation.

How is Chickenpox treated?

Use comfort measures to treat the symptoms of itchiness and fever.

- Bathe with ½ cup of baking soda in the bath water.
- Apply calamine lotion on the blisters.
- Wash hands often. Keep fingernails short and clean to help prevent infection caused by scratching.
- Treat fever with acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol, Tempra). **DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN OR ANY PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN ASPIRIN OR ASA** to children under 18 years old who have chickenpox. Aspirin can increase the risk of Reye's Syndrome, which causes damage to the liver and brain.

What to do if you are in contact with chickenpox?

- If someone in your house has chickenpox, do not try to keep them in a separate place in the house. It is almost impossible to keep chickenpox from spreading to other people living in the house.

If you or your child develops chickenpox, please call your nearest Public Health Centre to report the illness. Chickenpox is a notifiable disease under the Public Health Act.

Who is at risk if they contact someone with Chickenpox?

Chicken Pox can be extremely serious for:

- Anyone with immune systems problems.
- Pregnant women who have never had chickenpox.
- Adults who have never had chickenpox.

If you are at risk and are in contact with someone who has chickenpox, call your family doctor or Community Health Nurse at your nearest Public Health Centre for further advice.

How Can Chickenpox be Prevented?

Immunization is now available for specific age groups and risk categories. As one of those groups, non-immune children in Grade 5 are offered the vaccine beginning in 2001.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Common Cold

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is the Common Cold?

Colds are caused by small germs called viruses. Many different kinds of viruses can cause colds. This is why they are so common. Most people, especially children, get at least one cold per year. People who have close contact with children in places like daycares or schools are at higher risk for getting this infection.

What Causes the Common Cold?

A person gets a cold when he comes in contact with the virus that causes it. The virus can be passed when infected people cough or sneeze the virus into the air, which is then breathed in by healthy people. It is also passed when a healthy person touches a surface, such as a door knob, which was touched by an infected person and then touches his eyes or nose allowing the virus to enter the body.

How to Recognize the Common Cold

The signs and symptoms of a cold include:

- A runny or stuffy nose (the most common symptom).
- A sore or scratchy throat.
- Fever in a few cases.
- Dry cough.

How are Colds Prevented?

Good health habits that are practiced every day are an important part of preventing the common cold and other illnesses. Such habits include a regular bedtime, getting enough rest and eating a well-balanced diet that includes fresh fruit and vegetables.

How to Prevent the Spread of Colds:

- Avoid contact with other people whenever possible.
- Wash hands after covering their mouths or noses when they sneeze or cough and after wiping their noses.
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue if coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands after using a tissue.

How is the Common Cold Treated?

There is no specific treatment for the common cold. Rest and drinking hot fluids can help ease the symptoms. Some people find that decongestants help, but if you have high blood pressure, check with your doctor before taking decongestants. Antibiotics do not help unless you develop a complication like an ear or sinus infection.

See your doctor as soon as possible if:

- You develop a high fever, stiff neck or earache.
- You have a cough that will not go away, especially if you are coughing up mucous.
- You have asthma and the cold is making your asthma worse.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Fifth Disease

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Fifth Disease?

Fifth Disease is a fairly common childhood illness that most often occurs in the winter and spring. It is caused by a virus. Fifth Disease is usually a mild illness that is recognized by a body rash and bright red cheeks. It is also known as “slapped-cheek” syndrome.

Fifth Disease is most common among school-aged children, but younger children and adults may also get the disease. Most adults had Fifth Disease when they were children and will not get it again if they are in contact with an infected person.

Pregnant women and children with chronic anemia or immune system problems, such as leukemia, should contact their physicians if they are in contact with Fifth Disease.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Fifth Disease?

- In children, the illness is usually very mild. Some children do not become ill at all.
- The illness normally starts with a mild fever, headache and achiness for a few days.
- A red rash starts on the face that looks like a “slapped-cheek.”
- One to four days later, a lace-like rash appears on the arms, legs and body. The rash comes and goes over the next one to three weeks. A child will usually feel better once the rash appears.
- Adults with Fifth Disease are usually more ill than children and will often have a lot of joint pain. Joint pain may be severe enough to keep the adult in bed for several days.

How is Fifth Disease spread?

Fifth Disease is spread the same way that the common cold is spread. The virus is in the mucous and saliva of an infected person and is spread through the air when that person breathes, coughs or sneezes. The virus can also be spread through contact with the mucous or saliva of a person who has Fifth Disease.

A person who has never had Fifth Disease may develop the disease 4 to 14 days after contact with an infected person.

How is Fifth Disease treated?

- Treat fever and achiness with acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol, Tempra, Panadol).

How can the spread of Fifth Disease be prevented?

It is difficult to prevent the spread of Fifth Disease because an infected person may not show any symptoms, and the disease is mainly spread during the few days BEFORE the rash appears. For that reason, children DO NOT need to stay home from school or daycare once the rash appears.

To reduce the spread of Fifth Disease:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water after wiping a child’s nose or handling used tissues.
- Teach children to put used tissues in garbage containers and to wash their hands well after coughing, sneezing or blowing their noses.
- Do not share eating utensils or drinks.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

German Measles (Rubella)

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Rubella?

Rubella, or German Measles, is a mild disease caused by a virus. It is also known as “3-day measles” because the rash lasts about three days. Rubella is not very common anymore because most children and young adults have been immunized and most older adults had the disease when they were children.

Rubella is a harmless disease for most people, except for pregnant women. Rubella may cause miscarriage, stillbirth or birth defects. One out of four women who get Rubella during the first three months of pregnancy will have a baby born with birth defects. Rubella can damage the baby’s eyes, ears, heart, nervous system and brain. This condition is called Congenital Rubella Syndrome.

All cases of Rubella must be reported to Regional Public Health.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Rubella?

Symptoms are usually mild and some people with Rubella have no symptoms at all. When symptoms do occur they might include:

- A slight fever, headache, achiness and small swollen glands at the back of the neck and behind the ears.
- A pink rash that starts on the face and moves down over the body and onto the arms and legs. The rash lasts two to five days.
- Joint pain in teenagers and adults, especially females.

How is Rubella spread?

The virus that causes rubella is found in the mouth, nose and throat of an infected person. It is spread through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes or breathes. The virus is also spread by direct contact with the mucous of an infected person, such as by kissing. A person with Rubella can spread the virus to other people for about five days before and at least four days after the rash appears.

How is Rubella treated?

There is no specific treatment for Rubella. Use acetaminophen (e.g., Tempra, Tylenol, Panadol) to treat fever and achiness. People with Rubella should stay home from school, childcare or work until four days after the rash appears.

How can the spread of Rubella be prevented?

Immunization is the best way to prevent the spread of Rubella. All children should get a Rubella vaccine at one year of age and a booster dose before starting school. Anyone who has not had Rubella or a Rubella vaccine can get the vaccine at any Public Health Centre.

A woman who is old enough to have a baby should have a blood test to see if she is protected against Rubella before she gets pregnant. If she is not protected, she should get a Rubella vaccine.

A pregnant woman should ask her physician to do a Rubella blood test. If she is not protected, she should get a Rubella vaccine after the baby is born.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Hand-Foot-and-Mouth Disease

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Hand-Foot-and-Mouth disease?

Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is a mild illness that affects the hands, feet and mouth. The disease usually occurs in children under 10 years old, but can easily spread to other people who have never had the illness. Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is caused by a virus and most often occurs in the summer and fall. The illness may last seven to ten days. Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is **not** related to the hoof and mouth disease that animals get.

What are the signs and symptoms of Hand-Foot-and-Mouth disease?

Most cases of Hand-Foot-and-Mouth disease do not show any symptoms. When symptoms occur, they are usually mild and might include:

- Mild fever, headache, sore throat, loss of appetite and lack of energy.
- Sores that develop in the mouth, on the tongue and sometimes on the gums and lips.
- About two days after sores develop, a red rash with blisters appears on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. This rash may also appear in the diaper area of children who wear diapers.

How is Hand-Foot-and-Mouth disease spread?

The virus that causes this disease is in the mucus of the nose and throat as well as in the stool of an infected person. The virus is spread through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes or breathes. It can also be spread when wiping the face or nose of a person with the disease and when changing diapers or helping an infected child use the toilet.

Hand-foot-and-mouth disease can be spread for a short time before symptoms appear and then for one to two weeks after the illness begins. A person can develop hand-foot-and-mouth disease in three to seven days after contact with a person who has the disease.

How is Hand-Foot-and-Mouth disease treated?

- Hand-foot-and-mouth disease can look like a more serious disease. If you think a child has hand-foot-and-mouth disease, he or she should be checked by a physician.
- Treat fever and pain with acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol, Tempra, Panadol).
- If the child has a sore mouth, offer soft, bland foods and encourage the child to drink fluids that do not irritate the mouth.
- The child can continue to go to school if he or she is feeling well.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

How can the spread of Hand-Foot-and-Mouth disease be prevented?

To reduce the spread of Hand-Foot-and-Mouth disease:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water after wiping a child's nose or handling used tissues.

- Teach children to put used tissues in garbage containers and to wash their hands well after coughing, sneezing or blowing their noses.
- Do not share eating utensils or drinks.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Hantavirus

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Hantavirus infection?

Hantavirus is a disease carried primarily by deer mice. It is spread to people from the mouse or from its droppings, urine or saliva. Hantavirus infection is quite rare in Alberta, but it is fatal in 65 to 77 percent of cases. To date, teenagers and adults are the only age groups that have been affected by hantavirus.

What are the signs and symptoms of Hantavirus infection?

The symptoms of hantavirus are like the flu and include a fever of up to 104°F (40°C), chills, body aches and trouble breathing.

Symptoms will most likely appear within two weeks after contact with deer mice or their droppings, urine or saliva. In a few cases, symptoms may not appear for up to 45 days after contact.

How is Hantavirus spread?

Hantavirus is spread to people from deer mice who are infected with the virus or from their droppings, urine or saliva. Hantavirus is breathed in when small particles that contain the virus become airborne. The infection cannot spread from person to person. Deer mice have been trapped in homes and outbuildings within the Capital Health Region, but they are more common in rural areas.

Deer mice have a white underbelly and their droppings are brown, rough and look like whole peppercorns. Although only a small number of deer mice carry the virus, people should treat all mice and their droppings/urine as though they are infected.

How is Hantavirus treated?

If you have flu-like symptoms that do not go away in the normal time, see your doctor. Your doctor may order a test for hantavirus, particularly if you have been around deer mice or their droppings.

How can the spread of Hantavirus be prevented?

There are no vaccines to protect against hantavirus. The only protection is to try to keep homes, schools and workplaces free of deer mice and to clean up any mouse droppings or urine.

To clean up mice droppings or urine:

1. Wet down the droppings with a disinfectant or bleach solution. Use three tablespoons of commercial bleach per one gallon (four litres) of water. Note: Bleach solution should be mixed fresh when it is needed as it becomes less effective after 24 hours.
2. Wipe up the droppings with paper towels or old rags. Wear rubber gloves so that your hands do not touch the droppings.
3. Put the droppings and the paper towels or rags in a plastic bag and put the bag in the school or household garbage.
4. Clean the area again with the bleach solution.
5. Wash your hands well with soap and warm water.

To handle a dead mouse:

1. Wear rubber gloves or put your hand inside a plastic bag, pick up the mouse then turn the bag inside out so that the mouse is inside the bag.
2. Wash your hands well with soap and warm water.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Hepatitis A

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. It is also called “infectious hepatitis” because it spreads from one person to another more easily than other types of hepatitis. The illness usually lasts two to three weeks, but it takes some people several months to get better. In rare cases, Hepatitis A may cause death.

Anyone can get Hepatitis A. Once a person has had Hepatitis A, they usually cannot get it again.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A may cause no symptoms at all or only very mild illness in some people, especially young children. When symptoms do appear, they often begin suddenly with fever, tiredness, poor appetite, nausea and abdominal pain. A few days to a few weeks later, the urine may become dark, the stools may become light in color and the eyes and skin may become yellow (jaundice). Some people, especially young children, do not become jaundiced.

A person can get Hepatitis A two weeks to two months after being in contact with someone who has it. Most often it takes about one month for the symptoms to appear.

How is Hepatitis A spread?

The virus that causes Hepatitis A is found in the stools of an infected person. It is most commonly spread from the stool to the hands when a person accidentally touches the stool, such as when having a bowel movement, changing a diaper or helping a child use the toilet. The virus is then spread from the hands to other things, such as food. Another person can then get Hepatitis A when they eat food or drink water that is contaminated with the virus.

Sharing articles that contain saliva, such as toothbrushes, eating utensils or drinking cups may spread the disease. But the disease is not spread as easily by contact with saliva.

People with Hepatitis A can spread the virus to others as early as one to two weeks before they feel sick and for one more week after the illness starts.

How is Hepatitis A treated?

There is no specific treatment for Hepatitis A. A person with Hepatitis A usually needs a lot of rest. Frequent small, bland meals may help if the person feels sick and has a poor appetite. Avoid fatty food, alcohol and caffeine. Relieve itchy skin (from the jaundice) with frequent baths that have a ½ cup of baking soda added to the bathwater.

How can the spread of Hepatitis A be prevented?

- Always wash your hands after using the toilet or changing a diaper and before preparing or eating food. Teach children to do the same.
- Do not share articles that touch the mouth such as eating utensils, drinking containers or toothbrushes.
- If you are in contact with a person who has Hepatitis A, call your nearest Public Health Centre right away for advice. Some people may need a shot of Immune Globulin to prevent Hepatitis A from developing.
- Hepatitis A vaccine is available for persons at high risk of infection because of travel, lifestyle or treatment interventions.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Hepatitis B

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. It is also called “serum hepatitis” because the disease can be spread by contact with the blood (serum) of an infected person. The illness usually lasts two to three weeks, but it takes some people several months to get better. In some cases, Hepatitis B may cause death.

Most people recover from Hepatitis B in about three months and are protected from getting the disease again. About 10 percent of people recover and feel well again but can still spread the disease to other people. They are called carriers because they carry the virus for a long time – usually for the rest of their lives. Carriers have a higher risk of developing liver disease or cancer later in life.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Hepatitis B?

A person with Hepatitis B may have no symptoms at all or only very mild symptoms, especially if the person is a young child. When symptoms do occur, they often appear slowly and may include tiredness, poor appetite, joint pain, vomiting, nausea and abdominal pain. A few days to a week later, the urine may become dark, the stools may become light in color and the eyes and skin may become yellow (jaundice). Some people also develop a skin rash.

How is Hepatitis B spread?

The Hepatitis B virus is spread mainly through contact with blood, semen, vaginal fluids and very rarely, saliva. These fluids can enter the body by:

- Sharing needles with an infected person (including needles used in ear piercing, tattooing, electrolysis and acupuncture).
- Having sexual intercourse with an infected person.
- Sharing articles that carry small amounts of infected blood, such as razors, toothbrushes or earrings.

Hepatitis B can also be passed to an infant from his or her mother during pregnancy or birth.

Once the virus enters the body, it can take from 50 to 180 days for symptoms – if any – to appear.

How is Hepatitis B treated?

There is no specific treatment for Hepatitis B. A person with Hepatitis B usually needs a lot of rest. Frequent small, bland meals may help if the person feels sick and has a poor appetite. Avoid fatty food, alcohol and caffeine. Relieve itchy skin (from the jaundice) with frequent baths that have a ½ cup of baking soda added to the bath water.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

How can the spread of Hepatitis B be prevented?

- Clean up spills of blood carefully. (See *Cleaning Spills of Blood and Other Body Fluids*)
- Immunization can prevent the spread of Hepatitis B. All children in Grade 5 should get Hepatitis B vaccine.
- Other people wanting Hepatitis B vaccine can call Your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

If you have Hepatitis B:

- Throw away needles or razor blades carefully by putting them in a hard container such as a bleach bottle or coffee tin. Close the lid, tape it shut and put it in the garbage.
- Use a condom or avoid sexual intercourse. Your regular partner can be protected from the disease with a Hepatitis B vaccine.
- Do not share toothbrushes, earrings or razors. Even very small amounts of blood on these items can contain the virus.

- Do not share needles of any kind (drug injections, ear piercers, tattoo needles, electrolysis needles and acupuncture needles).
- Do not donate blood, organs or semen.

If you are in contact with a person who has Hepatitis B, call your nearest Public Health Centre for advice. Some people may need a shot of Immune Globulin and Hepatitis B vaccine to prevent Hepatitis B from developing.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Hepatitis C

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. It is different from Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. The Hepatitis C virus may lead to liver damage, cirrhosis and sometimes liver cancer. Most people with the virus will not experience any liver disease.

Although Hepatitis C has been around for many years, we have only recently developed a test for the antibody. About 80 percent of people, who test positive for the Hepatitis C virus, will always test positive. A small number of people are able to clear the virus from their blood after they are infected.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Hepatitis C?

Most people with Hepatitis C have no symptoms and may feel quite healthy. Other people may be tired and may have nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, fever, headache and abdominal pain. Some people may have itchy skin, yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice), dark urine or light colored stool.

It can take from 6 weeks to 9 months for symptoms to appear after a person is infected. In many people, symptoms do not show up for 20 years or more.

How is Hepatitis C spread?

The Hepatitis C virus is carried in the blood. The virus may be spread through contact with infected blood by:

- Sharing needles with an infected person (including needles used in ear piercing, tattooing, electrolysis and acupuncture.
- Sharing articles that carry small amounts of infected blood, such as razors, toothbrushes or earrings.

Before 1990, donated blood was not screened for the Hepatitis C virus. A person who had a blood transfusion BEFORE 1990 may be infected with the virus.

In rare cases, Hepatitis C is passed to an infant from his or her mother during pregnancy or birth.

How is Hepatitis C treated?

There is no specific treatment for Hepatitis C. A person with Hepatitis C usually needs a lot of rest. Frequent small, bland meals may help if the person feels sick and has a poor appetite. Avoid fatty food, alcohol and caffeine. Relieve itchy skin (from the jaundice) with frequent baths that have a ½ cup of baking soda added to the bathwater.

How can the spread of Hepatitis C be prevented?

- Clean up spills of blood carefully. (See *Cleaning Spills of Blood and Other Body Fluids.*)

If you have Hepatitis C:

- Throw away needles or razor blades carefully by putting them in a hard container such as a bleach bottle or coffee tin. Close the lid, tape it shut and put it in the garbage.
- Use a condom or avoid sexual intercourse if you or your partner is menstruating. Your regular partner should be tested for the Hepatitis C virus.
- Do not share toothbrushes, earrings or razors. Even very small amounts of blood on these items can contain the virus.
- Do not share needles of any kind (drug injections, ear piercers, tattoo needles, electrolysis needles and acupuncture needles).
- Do not donate blood, organs or semen.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

HIV/AIDS

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is HIV/AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. AIDS is the advanced stage of the disease caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). People living with advanced HIV infection or AIDS have weak immune and nervous systems. Certain types of diseases, such as pneumonia or cancer, can kill them.

Once a person is infected with HIV, the body produces antibodies to try to fight the virus. Although the antibodies cannot destroy the virus, a blood test can tell if a person has these antibodies that means he or she is infected with HIV. It can take up to six months after infection for these antibodies to appear.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of HIV infection?

While many people who are infected with HIV show no signs of the illness, symptoms of HIV infection may include:

- Flu-like symptoms that appear approximately three to four weeks after infection.
- A combination of symptoms which last many months, including weight loss, tiredness, fever, night sweats, dry cough, diarrhea, swollen glands, memory loss, confusion and depression.
- The presence of some infections, such as pneumonia or yeast infections (thrush), cancers or mental disorders.

How is HIV infection spread?

HIV is spread by contact with the blood, semen or vaginal fluids of a person who is infected with HIV. There are 3 main ways that the virus is passed from one person to another:

- Having unprotected sex (vaginal, anal or oral) with someone who is infected.
- Sharing needles for injecting drugs, tattooing, skin piercing or acupuncture with someone who is infected.
- From an infected mother to her child during pregnancy, at birth or by breast-feeding.

A person who had a blood transfusion before November 1985 may also be infected with HIV. However, all blood and blood products in Canada are now tested for HIV antibodies.

HIV is **NOT** spread by touching, sneezing, water fountains, toilet seats, or by mosquitoes or other insects.

How is HIV infection treated?

There is no cure for HIV infection or AIDS and no vaccine to prevent HIV infection. Treatment for infections, cancer and other symptoms can help most people with AIDS to live longer, but it does not cure HIV infection.

How can the spread of HIV be prevented?

The spread of HIV can be prevented by:

- Not having sexual intercourse.
- Practicing safer sex activities, including condom use.
- Not sharing needles or other injection drug equipment.

For More Information, Contact:

- Capital Health Birth Control Centre at 413-5735
- Capital Health STD Clinic at 413-5156
- AIDS Network of Edmonton Society
- Canadian Public Health Association, National AIDS Clearinghouse at 400, 1565 Carling Avenue
Ottawa, ON K1Z 8R1
Fax (613) 725-9826

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Impetigo

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Impetigo?

Impetigo is a skin infection that is caused by bacteria. It may develop when a rash such as eczema or cold sores becomes infected. It can also affect healthy skin. Impetigo usually affects skin around the nose, mouth and ears but can appear anywhere on the body. The infection spreads easily and should be treated promptly.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Impetigo?

The signs and symptoms of Impetigo include:

- A rash of small red spots.
- Blisters which form over the spots and then burst, forming brownish-yellow scabs.

How is Impetigo spread?

Impetigo is spread by direct contact with the infected area or by touching objects that have been in direct contact with the infected area. The infection can be spread until the rash has cleared up.

How is Impetigo treated?

Impetigo is treated with antibiotics that kill the bacteria. The infected area can also be washed with warm soapy water every day to remove scabs and to help the skin heal.

How can the spread of Impetigo be prevented?

- Keep the child's washcloth and towels separate from those of other family members.
- Teach children not to scratch open sores and make sure that fingernails are clipped and clean.
- Clean all scrapes with soap and water, then apply an antibiotic cream or ointment.

Children can return to school/child care after they have completed 24 hours of antibiotic treatment. If they do not take antibiotics, they can NOT return until the rash is clear.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Infectious Mononucleosis (Mono)

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Infectious Mononucleosis?

Infectious Mononucleosis is a communicable disease often caused by the Epstein-Barr virus. It tends to be more common in older children and young adults.

What are the signs and symptoms of Infectious Mononucleosis?

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Swollen glands
- Fatigue
- Rash
- Enlarged spleen and liver may occur
- About half of the people who develop infectious mononucleosis have few or no symptoms
- Most young children have a mild illness whereas adult can become more ill

How if Infectious Mononucleosis spread?

Infectious Mononucleosis is spread through contact with the saliva of someone who has the infection. This may include kissing and sharing beverage containers.

How soon can symptoms of Infectious Mononucleosis appear?

A person can develop Infectious Mononucleosis 4 to 6 weeks after contact with someone who has the infection. The period of time that a person can spread the disease is not definite.

Is exclusion necessary?

The person with Infectious Mononucleosis can attend childcare, school, or work unless they do not feel well enough to participate in regular activities.

How is Infectious Mononucleosis treated?

Although there is no specific treatment for Infectious Mononucleosis, the person with the disease should be under the care of a physician.

What should you do if you are in contact with Infectious Mononucleosis?

- Watch for signs of Infectious Mononucleosis; these may occur 4 to 6 weeks after contact.
- Do not share common beverage containers, dishes or eating utensils in order to minimize contact with saliva of the person who has the illness. If someone in your home has Infectious Mononucleosis, the items used by the person for eating and drinking can be washed in the dishwasher.
- Wash hands frequently.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Influenza

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Influenza?

Influenza or flu is caused by a virus. Most people with influenza get better within a week. However, children or adults with a chronic illness and adults over 65 may develop more severe illnesses, such as pneumonia.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Influenza?

The common symptoms of Influenza can include:

- High Fever
- Frequent Chills
- Headache
- Muscle pains
- Loss of appetite
- Cough (usually)
- Sore throat
- Extreme Tiredness

Symptoms may occur one to five days after exposure.

How is Influenza spread?

Influenza is spread through the air when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes. The virus can also be spread through contact with the mucous or saliva of a person who has the flu.

Adults with influenza are infectious for three to five days and young children for up to seven days after onset of symptoms.

How is Influenza treated?

In most cases, the symptoms of influenza can be treated by resting in bed, drinking plenty of fluids and taking acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) for fever and pain. **DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN OR ANY PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN ASPIRIN OR ASA to children under 18 years old who have influenza. Aspirin can increase the risk of developing Reye's Syndrome that damages the liver and brain.**

How can the spread of Influenza be prevented?

People who are in contact with many people every day, such as teachers, can reduce their risk of getting sick from influenza by being immunized **every** year. A yearly immunization is necessary because the influenza virus changes every year.

To reduce the spread of influenza:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water after wiping a child's nose or handling used tissues.
- Teach children to put used tissues in garbage containers and to wash their hands well after coughing, sneezing or blowing their noses.
- Do not share eating utensils or drinks.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Measles (Rubeola)

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Measles?

Measles is a serious disease caused by a virus. Measles is also known as *red measles* or *rubeola*. It can be a dangerous disease because it can lead to bronchitis, ear infection and pneumonia. In severe cases, measles can cause brain damage and sometimes death.

Measles is not a common disease anymore because most children and young adults have been immunized against it and most older adults had the disease in childhood. Anyone who is not immunized or who did not have the disease in the past can get measles.

Infants and adults who get measles usually get very sick. Pregnant women or people who are malnourished or have immune system problems have a greater chance of getting very sick.

Because measles is such a serious disease, all known and suspected cases of measles must be reported to Regional Public Health.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Measles?

- Begins with a cough, runny nose and high fever.
- Eyes are puffy, watery and sensitive to light.
- May see small, white patches in the mouth.
- A red, blotchy rash, which lasts 3 to 4 days, appears first on the face and spreads down the body, arms and legs.
- A person with measles is usually sick for 10 to 14 days.

How is Measles spread?

The measles virus is found in the nose and throat of a person with measles and is spread through the air when the person coughs, sneezes or breathes. A person with measles can spread the virus to other people for three to five days before the rash appears. A person can develop measles in 6 to 21 days after contact with someone who has the disease. The usual time is from 10 to 12 days.

How is Measles treated?

There is no specific treatment for measles. Watch the illness closely and call a doctor or Your nearest Public Health Centre for advice. Use Acetaminophen (e.g., Temptra, Tylenol, Panadol) to treat fever. Stay away from bright light.

A person with measles **MUST** stay home until after the fourth day of the rash.

How can the spread of Measles be prevented?

Immunization is the best way to prevent the spread of measles. All children should get a measles vaccine at one year of age and a second dose with their preschool booster at about five years of age. Adults born before 1957 have probably had measles and will not get it again.

If you are in contact with a person who has Measles, call your nearest Public Health Centre right away for advice. Some people may need a shot of immune globulin to prevent Measles from developing.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Meningitis

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Meningitis?

Meningitis is an inflammation or infection of the membrane that lines the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by bacteria (e.g., Meningococcal Meningitis) or virus (Viral Meningitis).

Most people who are exposed to the bacteria or virus do not become infected. The majority of those who are infected do not develop the disease or any symptoms. In a small number of people, the bacteria invade the body and result in meningitis or other serious infections.

Any age group can be affected, but the most common are children under five years of age and young adults, 15 to 25 years old.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Meningitis?

Early signs of meningitis include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting and a general “unwell” feeling. The person may or may not have a stiff neck. These symptoms are usually more severe than flu symptoms and develop more rapidly. In young children, the main symptom may be a noticeable change in behavior including sleepiness, irritability or excessive crying.

How is Meningitis spread?

Bacterial Meningitis. The bacteria that causes meningitis are found in the nose and throat of an infected person. The disease is spread from person to person by sharing items such as cigarettes, drinks and eating utensils that may be contaminated with mucous or through intimate contact such as kissing. Bacterial meningitis can also be spread through the air when a person is in regular contact with an infected person who is coughing and sneezing.

Viral Meningitis. The virus that causes meningitis is found in the stool or saliva of an infected person. It is most commonly spread from the stool to the hands, when a person accidentally touches the stool, such as when having a bowel movement, changing a diaper or helping a child use the toilet. The virus is then spread from the hands to other things, such as food. Another person can then get meningitis when they eat food or drink water that is contaminated with the virus. Sharing articles that contain saliva, such as toothbrushes, eating utensils or drinking cups may spread the disease. But the disease is not spread as easily by contact with saliva. Viral meningitis is NOT spread through the air.

How is Meningitis treated?

Bacterial meningitis is treated in hospital with antibiotics.

How can the spread of Meningitis be prevented?

- Do not share items such as cigarettes, drinks and eating utensils.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and teach children to do the same.

If you have been in close contact with a person who has Meningitis, call your nearest Public Health Centre for advice. You may be given an antibiotic to help prevent you from developing the disease.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Mumps

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Mumps?

Mumps is an infection and swelling of the salivary glands. These glands are just below and in front of the ears. The infection is caused by a virus.

Mumps is no longer a common disease. Most children and young adults have been immunized against mumps and most older adults had the disease in childhood. Anyone who is not immunized or who did not have the disease in the past can get mumps.

Cases of mumps must be reported to Regional Public Health.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Mumps?

- Some people with mumps are not very sick at all, while others are very ill. The illness is usually more severe in adults than in children.
- The main symptom of mumps is swelling and soreness just below and in front of one or both ears. The swelling lasts about nine days.
- Other symptoms may include fever, stiff neck and sore mouth and throat.
- A person with mumps may have a hard time swallowing or talking. Sour foods may be painful to swallow.
- Mumps can also cause temporary deafness because the swelling is so close to the ears.
- In adolescents and adults, mumps can cause the ovaries and testes to swell but sterility is rare.

How is Mumps spread?

The virus that causes mumps is found in the mucous and saliva of a person who has the disease. The virus is spread through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes or breathes. It is also found in tissues used by the infected person to wipe or blow the nose and can be spread to someone who touches the used tissues.

An infected person can spread the virus to other people for about seven days before and up to nine days after the swelling begins. A person can develop mumps within 12 to 25 days (usually 16 to 18 days) after contact with someone who has the disease.

How is Mumps treated?

There is no specific treatment for mumps. Use acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol, Tempra, Panadol) to treat pain and fever. Place warm or cool cloths against the swollen area to relieve pain. Lukewarm fluids and a soft bland diet are the easiest to swallow.

A child with mumps must stay home from school or childcare until nine days after the swelling starts.

How can the spread of Mumps be prevented?

Immunization is the best way to prevent the spread of mumps. All children should get a mumps vaccine at one year of age and a booster dose before starting school. Anyone who has not had the mumps or a mumps vaccine can get the vaccine at any Public Health Centre.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is an infection of the covering of the eyeball. Anyone can get conjunctivitis, but it is most common in children. There are three main types of conjunctivitis:

1. **Bacterial conjunctivitis**, which is often called Pink Eye, is most common in children. It is caused by bacteria and is easily spread to others.
2. **Viral conjunctivitis** is caused by a virus and can also be spread to others.
3. **Allergic conjunctivitis** is caused by an allergy. It may occur at certain times of the year, especially if a person has hay fever or other environmental allergies. It can also be caused by getting an allergen (something to which a person is allergic) in the eye. Allergic conjunctivitis does not spread to others.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Conjunctivitis?

In **bacterial conjunctivitis**, or Pink Eye, the white part of the eye looks red and the eyelid may be puffy. The eye may burn or itch and often feels scratchy like having sand in the eye. There may be pus in the eye, which can cause the eyelids to stick together when the person sleeps.

In **viral conjunctivitis**, the white of the eye looks pink. The eyes may be sore and are usually watery.

How is Conjunctivitis spread?

Bacterial and viral conjunctivitis may be spread by the hands. When a person with conjunctivitis touches the infected eye and then touches someone else, the infection spreads. The bacteria or virus can also be spread by towels, face cloths, tissues or anything else that touches the infected eye and then is touched by someone else.

A person can get **bacterial conjunctivitis** (Pink Eye) 2 to 3 days after contact with someone who has the infection. A person can get **viral conjunctivitis** in 12 hours to 3 days after contact.

How is Conjunctivitis treated?

Bacterial conjunctivitis is treated with antibiotic drops or ointment. Both eyes are treated, even if only one eye looks infected. A child with Pink Eye must stay home from school or childcare until he or she has had one full day (24 hours) of treatment.

There is no specific treatment for **viral conjunctivitis**. The infected person must simply wait until it clears on its own. A physician can say how long the child should stay home from school or childcare.

How can the spread of Conjunctivitis be prevented?

If you or your children have conjunctivitis:

- Wash your hands after touching or wiping the infected eye.
- Wash children's hands, or have them wash their own hands, after touching their eyes.
- Try to keep children from touching or rubbing their eyes.
- Immediately throw away tissues that have been used to wipe the infected eyes.
- Use clean towels, face cloths and pillowcases every day until the infection clears.
- Do not share towels and face cloths with an infected person.
- The infected person should stay home from school, child care or work until they have completed one full day (24 hours) of treatment for bacterial conjunctivitis or as recommended by your doctor for viral conjunctivitis.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Pinworms

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What are Pinworms?

Pinworms are tiny, white worms that live in the intestines of infected people. Adult worms are about 10 mm long and look like pieces of white thread. Pinworm infection is not a serious problem, but it is uncomfortable for the infected person because of itching around the anus.

Anyone can get pinworms. Young children are most often infected because they are usually not careful about washing their hands.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Pinworms?

Many people have no signs of infection and do not know that they are infected. Other people, especially children, may not sleep well at night or may have trouble sitting still because of the itching. Children also may not want to eat. In severe cases, the infected person may lose weight and have redness and swelling around the bum (anus) from scratching.

How are Pinworms spread?

Pinworms only infect people. They are usually spread by hand from touching the bum. The eggs can also rub off onto clothes, towels and sheets and will stick to the hands of anyone who touches them. From the hand, they can reach the mouth directly, by putting the hand in the mouth, or from other objects or food. People become infected when they swallow the eggs. Pinworm eggs can live for two to three weeks outside the body.

The life cycle of the pinworm lasts from two to eight weeks. The eggs are swallowed and hatch in the intestine. Adult worms crawl out of the anus and female worms lay their eggs on the skin around the anus. When the infected person touches his or her anus, the eggs can then spread to other people or can re-infect the same person. Pinworms are spread very easily from one person to another, especially among people in the same house.

How are Pinworms treated?

- A physician can do a simple test for the infection and then prescribe medicine.
- Everyone living in the house should take the medicine at the same time.
- The infected person should bath every day, washing his or her bottom with soap and water.
- Fingernails should be kept short to prevent re-infection.

How can the spread of Pinworms be prevented?

- Wash your hands well with soap and water after using the toilet and before preparing and eating food. Teach children to do the same.
- Do not bite your fingernails.

Once infection occurs:

- Wash the infected person's clothes, bedding and towels in hot water.
- On the day that everyone in the house starts to take the medicine, make sure everyone's sheets, towels, sleepwear and underwear are clean.
- A person with pinworms does not have to stay home from school, childcare or work.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Ringworm

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Ringworm?

Ringworm is a skin infection that is caused by a fungus. The sores on the skin look like a “ring,” but this infection has nothing to do with worms. The three most common places for ringworm are the scalp, the body and the feet (also called athlete's foot).

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Ringworm?

In **ringworm of the scalp**, the fungus starts as a small pimple that spreads in a circle. The hair in the infected area falls out, leaving a temporary bald patch. This patch is itchy and scaly.

In **ringworm of the body**, the infected area develops a rash that is shaped like a ring with raised edges. As the rash spreads, the centre clears. The area is itchy and flaky and may become moist and crusted.

In **ringworm of the foot**, the skin on the feet, usually around the toes, will get itchy and flaky. The skin may crack between the toes.

How is Ringworm spread?

The fungus can be picked up from people, animals or dirt. The fungus sticks to the fingers and can be spread when the infected person touches someone else. The fungus can also stick to things like combs, brushes, barrettes, head bands, hats, clothing, towels and sheets and can spread when someone else uses these items. It can also be spread by floors, bathtubs and shower stalls used by an infected person.

It takes several days from the time the fungus enters the skin until sores appear. It takes from 10 to 14 days for ringworm of the scalp and from 4 to 10 days for ringworm of the body to show. We do not know how long it takes for ringworm of the foot to show.

How is Ringworm treated?

Ringworm of the scalp or body should be diagnosed by a physician who will prescribe an anti-fungal medication.

Ringworm of the foot can be treated with anti-fungal cream, lotion or powder. These products are found in most drugstores, supermarkets and department stores. A prescription is not needed.

For all types of ringworm, gently wash the infected area with soap and water every day and dry it well. Lotion, cream or powder can be put on after washing and drying.

How can the spread of Ringworm be prevented?

- Wash your hands after touching animals.
- Wash your hands after working or playing in dirt.
- Do not share combs, brushes, towels or facecloths with anyone.

Once infection occurs:

- Wash your hands with soap and water after touching the infected area.
- Wear appropriate footwear in public facilities such as gymnasiums, sports or exercise centres, schools and shared bath or shower facilities.
- Do not use swimming pools until the infection is gone.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Scabies

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Scabies?

Scabies is a skin condition that can be spread from one person to another. It is caused by tiny insects called mites. These insects are so small that they can only be seen with a microscope. The female mite burrows into the top layer of skin where it lays two to three eggs each day. Over time, a very itchy rash develops.

Anyone can get scabies. It is more common in children than in teenagers or adults, because children are often in close contact with each other and often share personal articles. Scabies has nothing to do with cleanliness. People who are very clean can get Scabies just as easily as people who are less clean.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Scabies?

A person with Scabies will have an itchy rash. The rash is most often found on the wrists, in the creases of the elbows and knees, and between the fingers, but it can be found on any warm area of the body. In children under two years of age, the rash may also occur on the face and head, the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet. The rash can look like:

- Tiny red bumps
- Small blisters
- White, curvy lines (burrows)
- Scratch marks
- Small scales

Most of the body may be itchy. The itching usually gets worse when the body is warm, such as after a warm bath or during the night with the body is covered with blankets.

How is Scabies spread?

The scabies mites are on the skin of people who have scabies. They can also be found on the clothing, towels or bedding used by a person with scabies. The mites can spread to other people when they touch the skin of a person with scabies or use that person's clothing, towels or bedding. Scabies cannot be spread to animals and a person cannot get scabies from animals or places like a sandbox.

People who have never had scabies will develop a rash and itching in two to six weeks after the mite enters the skin. People who have had scabies before will develop symptoms more quickly, usually in one to four days after the mite enters the skin.

How is Scabies treated?

Scabies is treated in two steps. First, a special cream or lotion (called a scabicide) is used to kill the mites. Second, clothing, bedding and towels used by the infected person must be washed in hot water or packed in a sealed plastic bag and placed in the freezer for two to five days. For more detailed information on the treatment of scabies, call your nearest Public Health Centre.

How can the spread of Scabies be prevented?

- When a person has scabies, everyone in the house should be treated at the same time, even those who do not have a rash or itching.
- Anyone who has had skin to skin contact with a person who has scabies should be treated.
- Children who have scabies must stay home from school until treatment is finished.
- Adults who have scabies must not work in childcare, hospitals, nursing homes, extended care facilities or personal care settings until treatment is finished.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What are Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)?

Sexually transmitted diseases, or STD, are a group of different infections, which affect the sex organs and genital areas. STD is caused by viruses or bacteria, which need warmth, darkness and moisture to live.

Anyone who has sexual contact with a person who has a STD may become infected.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of STD?

The signs and symptoms of STD vary with the different types of infections. However, some of the general symptoms or warning signs include:

- A discharge of pus from the genital or urinary openings.
- Burning pain when a person goes pee.
- Itching or burning in and around the genitals.
- Sores on or around the genitals.
- Pain in the lower abdomen in women.

How are STD spread?

STD is spread from person to person through intimate sexual contact, usually vaginal intercourse or oral sex. STD cannot be spread through casual social contact such as kissing and shaking hands or by sharing eating utensils or using public washrooms.

Pregnant women can pass a STD to their infants during pregnancy or birth.

How are STD treated?

All STD need medical attention. Most STD can be cured or made less serious with treatment. Treatment may vary, depending on the type of STD. Having a STD does not protect against future infection. A person who has been successfully treated for a STD can still get that disease again.

In some cases, the sexual partners of an infected person are contacted and treated to prevent the spread of STD.

How can the spread of STD be prevented?

The best way to prevent the spread of STD is to avoid any sexual contact. Other ways include having sex with only one partner who you know is not infected and is not having sex with anyone else. Properly using a condom every time you have sex can lessen the risk of getting most STD, but condoms do not provide 100 percent protection.

For More Information, Contact:

- Your nearest Public Health Centre
- Capital Health Birth Control Centre at 413-5735
- Capital Health STD Clinic at 413-5156

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Strep Throat and Scarlet

Fever (Streptococcal Infection)

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Streptococcal Infection?

Streptococcal (strep) infection is caused by the group A streptococcus bacteria. The most common strep infections are strep throat and scarlet fever. Some people will get only strep throat or only scarlet fever. Other people may have both illnesses at the same time.

Anyone can get strep infection, but the disease is most common in school-aged children.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Strep Infections?

Some people with strep infections do not have any symptoms. For other people, strep throat usually begins with fever, headache, stomachache and a very sore throat. The throat and tonsils are red and swollen and usually have whitish yellow patches. The infected person may have swollen, tender glands in the neck.

Scarlet fever usually starts within 24 hours after a person begins to feel unwell. A red, “sandpapery” rash appears on the body. The infected person may have red, swollen lips, and the tongue may be red and flecked like a strawberry. About five days after the rash appears, the skin may begin to peel at the tips of the fingers and toes and on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet.

Serious heart or kidney problems can develop if strep infections are not treated with antibiotics.

How are Strep Infections spread?

The strep bacteria are found in an infected person’s saliva and in the nose and throat. The bacteria are spread through the air when the infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. It can also spread through contact with an infected person’s saliva or mucous, such as by kissing or sharing drinking cups or eating utensils.

When a person with a strep infection has been treated with antibiotics for 24 hours, they usually can no longer spread the bacteria. If not treated, an infected person can spread the disease for 10 to 21 days and, in some cases, for longer.

A person can develop a strep infection in 12 hours to 4 days after contact with someone who is infected.

How are Strep Infections treated?

Strep infections are treated with antibiotics, which are taken for 10 days. An infected person will start to feel better soon after starting the medication.

How can the spread of Strep Infection be prevented?

- Wash your hands well with soap and water after wiping your nose, covering coughs and sneezes and before preparing or eating food. Teach children to do the same.
- A person who develops signs of strep infection should see their doctor as soon as possible.
- If you have had rheumatic fever in the past, see your doctor right away if you are in contact with someone who has a strep infection.

An infected person should not go to school, childcare or work until antibiotics have been taken for a full day (24 hours).

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

Communicable Disease Facts

Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

This information is intended for school personnel. Fact sheets for parent notification can be obtained in consultation with your school nurse.

What is Whooping Cough?

Whooping cough, also called Pertussis, is a serious infection of the respiratory system caused by a bacteria. It is named “whooping cough” because people with this illness often make a “whooping” noise during severe coughing spasms.

Anyone can get whooping cough, but it is most common in young children. The disease is most serious in children under one year of age and may lead to pneumonia, seizures, brain damage and occasionally death. Older children and adults can also get whooping cough, but they usually do not get as sick as young children and infants.

All cases of whooping cough must be reported to Regional Public Health.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Whooping Cough?

The illness occurs in three stages:

Stage 1. This stage is very much like a cold. Symptoms include a runny nose, watery eyes, low-grade fever and a cough. The first stage lasts one to two weeks.

Stage 2. The cough worsens and becomes dry and constant. The infected person has coughing fits, which can last several minutes and occur many times a day. The coughing is often worse at night. The infected person may have trouble breathing and may cough so hard that he or she vomits or turns blue in the face. A “whoop” may be heard during coughing fits. This stage lasts two to three weeks.

Stage 3. The infected person no longer has coughing fits but may have a persistent, dry cough. This stage lasts three to four weeks.

How is Whooping Cough spread?

The bacteria which causes whooping cough is in the nose and throat of a person who has the disease. The bacteria are spread through the air when the person coughs or sneezes. It can also spread through contact with an infected person’s saliva or mucous, such as by kissing or sharing drinking cups or eating utensils.

A person with whooping cough can spread the bacteria from the beginning of the illness until about three weeks after the coughing starts. A person can get whooping cough in 7 to 14 days after contact with someone who has the disease.

How is Whooping Cough treated?

Whooping cough is treated with an antibiotic. The antibiotic will not cure the cough, but it will prevent the spread of the disease to others by clearing the bacteria from the infected person’s body. When the antibiotic has been taken for five days, the person can no longer spread the disease to other people, even though he or she may still have a cough.

How can the spread of Whooping Cough be prevented?

Immunization is the best way to prevent the spread of whooping cough. All children should get a pertussis vaccine with the diphtheria, tetanus and polio vaccines at 2, 4, 6 and 18 months of age and before starting school. Three or four doses are needed to build up the best protection. People over seven years of age are not given the vaccine because the disease is less severe in older children and adults.

A person who has whooping cough should stay home from school, childcare or work until his or her doctor or Regional Public Health says that he or she may return.

If you are in contact with a person who has whooping cough, call your nearest Public Health Centre for advice. You may need to take an antibiotic to prevent the disease from developing.

If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest Public Health Centre for more information.

**If you suspect a communicable disease, contact your nearest
Public Health Centre for more information.**