

Infection Exposure Contagious Periods and Incubation Periods

Definition:

- Incubation Period: Time interval between exposure and onset of symptoms.
- Contagious Period: Time interval during which a sick child's disease is contagious to others.
- Infections that are not contagious (reassure parents about these): otitis media, sinusitis, urinary tract infection, pneumonia, and bacteremia.

Disease	Incubation Period (Days)	Contagious Period (Days)
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Skin Infections:

Chicken Pox	14-16	2 days before rash until all sores have crusts
Fifth disease (<i>Erythema infectiosum</i>)	10-14	7 days before rash until rash begins
Hand foot and mouth disease	3-6	Onset of mouth ulcers until fever gone
Impetigo (strep or staph)	2-5	Onset of sores until 24 hours on antibiotic
Lice	7	Onset of itch until 1 treatment
Measles	10-12	4 days before rash until rash gone (7 days)
Roseola	10-15	Onset of fever until rash gone (2 days)
Rubella (German Measles)	14-21	7 days before rash until rash gone (4 days)
Scabies	30	Onset of rash until 1 treatment
Scarlet Fever	3-6	Onset of fever or rash until 24 hours on antibiotic
Shingles (contagious for chickenpox)	14-16	Onset of rash until all sores have crusts (7 days) (Note: No need to isolate if sores can be kept covered.)
Warts	30-180	Staying home is unnecessary because the infection is very mild and/or minimally contagious.

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Respiratory Infections:

Bronchiolitis	4-6	Onset of cough until 7 days
Colds	2-5	Onset of runny nose until fever gone
Cold sores (herpes)	2-12	Less than 6 years old, stay home until sores are dry (No isolation if sores are on part of body that can be covered). More than 6 years old, no isolation necessary if beyond touching, pick stage.
Coughs (viral)	2-5	Onset of cough until fever gone
Croup (viral)	2-6	Onset of cough until fever gone
Diphtheria	2-5	Onset of sore throat until 4 days on antibiotic
Influenza	1-2	Onset of cough until fever gone
Sore throat (strep)	2-5	Onset of sore throat until 24 hours on antibiotic
Sore throat (viral)	2-5	Onset of sore throat until fever gone
Tuberculosis	14-70	Until 2 weeks on drugs (Note: most childhood TB is not contagious.)
Whooping cough	7-10	Onset of runny nose until 5 days on antibiotic

Intestinal Infections:

Diarrhea, bacterial	1-5	Diarrhea: Less than 6 years old, stay home until stools are formed. More than 6 years old stay home until fever is gone, diarrhea is mild, and child has control over loose BM's.
Diarrhea, giardia	7-21	
Diarrhea, traveler's	1-6	
Diarrhea, viral (Rotavirus)	1-3	
Hepatitis A	14-50	Hepatitis: 2 weeks before jaundice begins until jaundice resolved
Hepatitis B	50-180	
Pinworms	21-28	Staying home is unnecessary because the infection is very mild and/or minimally contagious.
Vomiting, viral	2-5	Until vomiting stops

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Other Infections:

Infectious Mononucleosis	30-50	Onset of fever until fever gone (7 days)
Meningitis, bacterial	2-10	7 days before symptoms until 24 hours on IV antibiotics in hospital
Mumps	16-18	5 days before swelling until swelling gone
Pinkeye without pus (viral)	1-5	Staying home is unnecessary because the infection is very mild and/or minimally contagious.
Pinkeye with pus (bacterial)	2-7	Onset of pus until 1 day on antibiotic eye drops

References:

- (1) Incubation periods are from American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Infectious Diseases, 1988 Red Book, 21st edition, Evanston, Illinois.
- (2) Isolation recommendations are from Garner, J.S. and Simmons, B.P. "Guideline for Isolation Precautions in Hospitals, Infection Control 4" (Suppl.) 1983.
- (3) Updates from B.D. Schmitt, M.D., author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Book, Copyright 1999 Clinical Reference Systems.