

## How Can I Help Prevent the Spread of Infectious Diseases?

Organisms, such as bacteria, fungi, viruses, or parasites, can cause infectious disease, which can then be spread from one person to another. To protect the children in your care, it is important that you know about some of the most common diseases and the steps to take to help prevent the spread of these diseases.

### What are some of the most common? What are the symptoms?

- Colds (virus)
  - Stuffy or runny nose
  - Sneezing
  - Tiredness
- Flu (virus)
  - Fever
  - Chills
  - Cough
  - body aches
- Conjunctivitis (bacteria or virus)
  - Discomfort of the eye, including feeling like there is sand in the eye
  - Pain and/or itching in the eye
  - Redness of the eye or inner eyelid
  - Discharge from the eye
  - Swelling of the eye or eyelid
- Head Lice (parasite)
  - Feeling as if something is moving around on the head
  - Itching on the scalp
  - Sores or bumps on the head
  - Nits, which often look like dandruff
- Cold sores (virus)
  - Blisters/sores on the lips and inside the mouth
  - Fever
  - Muscle aches
  - General ill feeling
  - Irritability
- Ringworm (fungus)
  - Ringworm of the scalp - small sores that resemble pimples; sores that are patchy, flaky, or scaly; may look like dandruff; may ooze fluid
  - Ringworm of the skin – itchy red skin with a round patchy rash that has raised borders and a clear center
  - Ringworm of the nails - nails may become thick, white or yellowish, and brittle



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## What Precautions Should I Take?

**To keep yourself and the children in your care as healthy as possible, follow these suggestions:**

- Provide hand-washing sinks and soap in the child care environment according to minimum standards for child care licensing.
- Wash your own hands at least as often as required by minimum standards to keep yourself healthy and to model good habits.
- Routinely clean objects and surfaces that are touched by adults or children, such as toys, doorknobs, handrails, keyboards, countertops, or phones.
- Routinely wash or dry clean soft objects, such as towels, clothing, and stuffed toys.
- Make certain children are not sharing cups, glasses, or other eating utensils.
- Keep a supply of tissues, paper towels, and soap on hand at all times.
- Have a written policy regarding what will happen if there is an outbreak of contagious disease in your child care center, including a requirement that sick children stay home until they are symptom-free or no longer contagious. This policy should match or exceed the requirements for exclusion from care listed in minimum standards for child care licensing. Have a written policy in place for head lice.
- Stay home from work if you are sick.
- Have a plan in place for separating sick workers or children from others until they can go home.

## Promoting Healthy Habits for Children

One of the most important ways to protect the children you care for is to teach them healthy habits that can stay with them throughout their lives. Some habits you should model and teach the children include:

- Teaching children to cover their mouths and noses when they cough or sneeze. Teach them to use a tissue to cover their mouths and noses, and to discard the tissue after using it once. If there are no tissues available, let them know they can cough or sneeze into the crooks of their elbows, rather than on their hands.
- Consider having the children wash their hands upon arrival at the child care program to cut down on spread of germs from home to child care.
- Teaching children about germs and how germs spread. Let them know that putting hands on their faces, eyes, noses or mouths can increase their chances of getting sick.
- Teaching children good hand washing technique. Be certain they learn how and how long to wash, always using soap. Create a poster with pictures and place it near the hand washing sink to help children remember the steps to healthy hand washing.
- Reminding children not to share towels, washcloths, dishes or any other personal items that could carry disease-spreading germs.

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