Infectiousness and exclusion periods for infectious diseases

Disease	Incubation period	Infective period	Exclusion from school/work	Action for contacts
Chickenpox	11–20 days	From onset of rash until all lesions are crusted about 5–7 days later	At least 5 days from onset of rash and until all lesions have crusted over	Refer babies <4 weeks old and non-immune, immunosuppressed or pregnant contacts
Conjunctivitis	1–3 days for viral, 5–12 for bacterial	While discharge present	None	None, but contact HPT if an outbreak or cluster occurs
COVID-19	2–14 days	5 days after test	5 days (or at least 3 days if age ≤18 years) after a positive COVID-19 test and no longer with high fever or feeling unwell	None
Cryptosporidium	2–10 days	From onset of diarrhoea until 2 weeks after it stops	Until 48 hours after last diarrhoea or vomiting episode. No swimming for 2 weeks after infection cleared	HPT will decide
Diarrhoea and vomiting	1 hour–14 days (depending on cause)	While diarrhoea lasts	Until 48 hours after last diarrhoea or vomiting episode	No exclusion unless particular cause, when HPT will decide
Glandular fever	4–7 weeks	Very variable, from 7 weeks before to 18 months after symptoms	None	None
Hand, foot and mouth disease	3–5 days	7 days	None	None, but contact HPT if a large number of children are affected
Head lice	7–10 days	As long as lice or live eggs are present	None	None
Impetigo	1–10 days	While purulent lesions persist	Until lesions crusted, or 48 hours after treatment started	None
Measles	1–3 weeks	From 4 days before onset of rash to 4 days after	4 days from onset of rash	Refer babies <1 year and non-immune, immunosuppressed or pregnant contacts
Mumps	12–25 days	From 2 days before onset of symptoms to 5 days after	5 days from onset of swelling	None
Parvovirus (slapped cheek)	14–21 days	Until 24 hours after fever goes	None	Refer pregnant contacts at <30 weeks' gestation
Pertussis (whooping cough)	5–21 days	Up to 3 weeks if untreated	Until 2 days after starting antibiotic, or 3 weeks after onset of symptoms if no antibiotic given	Consult HPT about contact tracing
Rubella (no confirmed case in UK since 2019)	12–23 days	From 7 days before onset of rash to 5–7 days after	5 days from onset of rash	Refer non-immune pregnant contacts at <20 weeks' gestation
Scabies	4–6 weeks	Until mites and eggs have been destroyed	Until first treatment done	Household and close contacts require treatment at the same time
Scarlet fever	12 hours–5 days	Up to 24 hours after antibiotic, but up to 3 weeks if treatment declined	24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment or, if treatment declined, excluded until resolution of symptoms	Contact HPT if more than one suspected case

© NMIC August 2024

Disease	Incubation period	Infective period	Exclusion from school/work	Action for contacts
Shingles	Not relevant	From onset of rash until all lesions are dry, but rare as a cause of chickenpox (may cause chickenpox only by direct contact)	None, provided lesions covered	Refer babies <4 weeks and non-immune, immunosuppressed or pregnant contacts if exposed to uncovered lesions
Threadworms	2–6 weeks	As long as eggs present	None	Treatment recommended for child and household
Tinea	4–14 days	While lesions are active	None	None
Verrucae (plantar warts)	1–24 months	As long as warts are present	None (but cover warts with waterproof plaster for swimming/barefoot sports)	None

© NMIC August 2024