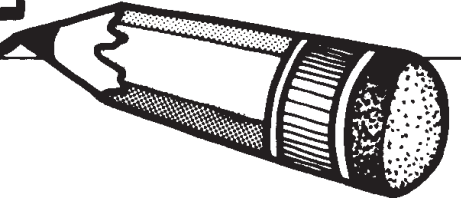


Parenting Pipeline



*A newsletter for parents of kindergarten children
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service*



Childhood Diseases

Your children's age, habits and surroundings lead to contact with a variety of germs that affect their health.

Kindergarten children can learn to fight various germs with cleanliness. You can begin to teach your child general information about communicable diseases.

Germs are tiny, invisible creatures that make us sick. Germs travel from one person to another. We can wash some away when we wash our hands, hair and bodies. Washing after using the bathroom, after sneezing or wiping our nose, and before we eat is important. Taking medicine from your doctor or getting a shot can kill some germs.

Prevention is the best treatment. Children should be immunized for protection against many childhood diseases. Keep an up-to-date record of when and where the immunizations have occurred for your child.

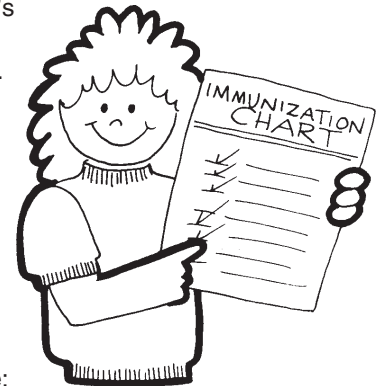
Chicken pox is caused by a virus and characterized by skin eruptions. It begins with a rash accompanied by small bumps or lesions. These bumps mostly are on the face, scalp and trunk of the body but may appear anywhere. They develop in crops (batches) every three to four days and produce tiny

blisters that leave scabs. Fresh lesions may begin to appear as others scab over.

The lesions start crusting within 24 to 48 hours. Some children will just begin to heal or scab over when a new batch appears. High fever, headaches, dehydration, swelling of lymph glands, severe itching and discomfort are common symptoms. Most children will have the last lesions crusted within five to 10 days after onset of the disease. A vaccine has been developed. Check with your health-care provider or county public health office for details.

Your child should remain home until the last lesions are crusted to prevent passing the disease to others. It is highly contagious; coughing or sneezing spreads it. The disease has an incubation period of seven to 21 days. Treatment includes:

- Apply calamine lotion, take soda or (Aveeno) oatmeal baths and take an over-the-counter drug such as Benadryl for the itching.
- Pat body dry. Do not rub.
- Use acetaminophen such as Children's Tylenol to reduce fever. **DO NOT** use aspirin or aspirin-containing products. Aspirin use can trigger Reye's Syndrome, which interferes with liver and brain functions.
- Get plenty of bed rest and drink lots of fluids.
- Wash hands often.
- Consult a health-care provider if the child's fever goes above 102 degrees or takes more than four days to disappear; if the child complains of neck ache; or if the child seems confused or listless, is vomiting or has a stiff neck, or has difficulty breathing or a severe cough.



Cold germs are exposed to kindergartners daily. Teach the importance of:

- Covering their mouth and nose with arm or elbow when sneezing or coughing
- Disposing of soiled tissues properly
- Using their own glass
- Using soap and hot water to wash their hands after every sneeze and every time they use a tissue



Because no cure for a cold exists, help make your children's cold as tolerable as possible. Antibiotics are not useful. Instead, help them get exercise, fresh air, balanced meals, fluids and lots of sleep. Avoid chilling, overheating and dampness because they lower the body's resistance and ability to fight infections.

Impetigo is a bacterial skin infection most often seen around the lips, nose and ears, but it can be anywhere on the body. Common skin organisms carried in the nose and on the skin cause it.

Impetigo starts as small blisters that break and crust over to become yellow-brown scabs that look like brown sugar. Impetigo rarely is serious, but it is highly contagious and should be treated immediately (within reason).

- Direct contact spreads it. Keep your children out of school until a health-care provider has seen them and prescribed treatment. Antibiotic creams and oral medications are common.
- Avoid touching the area.
- Proper hand washing is a must.
- Avoid sharing towels and toilet articles.
- Dispose of wound dressings carefully.
- Impetigo is more common among younger children during warm weather and among the chronically ill.

Diarrhea – loose and numerous bowel movements – is embarrassing and uncomfortable to kindergartners.

- Intestinal organisms cause diarrhea, so it may be contagious.
- Washing hands thoroughly after bathroom use is essential.
- Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day.
- Monitor for signs of dehydration.
- Missing school is necessary for your child's comfort.

Pinkeye, or conjunctivitis, is the infection or inflammation of the thin membrane that covers the eyeball and lines the inside of the eyelid. The white part of the eye becomes red and produces mucus that is sticky and builds up. It often dries on the eyelashes at night and eyes are "stuck together" by morning.

Pinkeye is the most common eye disease in the United States and spreads easily among children and families.

- It's spread by contact with eye discharge.
- Use clean cloths each time to cleanse the eye.
- Visit a health-care provider to get prescription antibiotics.

- Keep your children at home to prevent spreading the disease. They may return to school or activities according to their doctor's instructions.
- Pinkeye usually clears up in 10 to 14 days, or sooner with medication and prompt medical attention. It has no long-term complication.

Fifth disease most often affects children 5 to 14 years old. No vaccine or medicine is available to prevent the disease. Coughing or sneezing spreads the mild virus.

A red rash generally begins on the face, giving a "slapped cheeks" appearance. The rash may spread to the rest of the body and could look "lacy" and itch. Heat from the sun, exercise or bath water may make the rash reappear during the next two to three weeks. The child may have a low-grade fever and general feeling of tiredness or "cold" symptoms before the rash breaks out.

The child may have no other symptoms, or fatigue, a low-grade fever, runny nose and sore throat may accompany the rash. Nonaspirin tablets may provide comfort. Fifth disease is contagious during the early part of illness.

Fever indicates an infection in the body. It helps the body kill infectious organisms.

A rectal thermometer, which reads normal temperature at 99.6 degrees Fahrenheit, provides the most accurate temperature reading. The oral thermometer probably will be more acceptable to your kindergartner; 98.6 F indicates normal temperature. Digital thermometers placed in the ear are available, too.

Remember, everyone has daily variations in body temperature, with highs usually between 4 and 6 p.m.

Fever increases the speed at which the body works. Good nourishment is needed. Offer fluids often.

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This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with kindergarten children by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other nutrition, youth and family programs.

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