

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD
against
COMMUNICABLE
DISEASES

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*Lesson Material on Care of
the Preschool Child
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PROTECTING YOUR CHILD AGAINST COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

What is a communicable disease?

A communicable disease is a disease that can be transmitted to one person from another. The manner of transmission, or "catching," varies. It may occur by contact with a person who has the disease (as in shaking hands, kissing, being sneezed or coughed on or even breathed on), or by contact with handkerchief, dishes, clothing, or other articles soiled from body discharges of the sick person. Among the communicable diseases are diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, scarlet fever, smallpox, typhoid fever, infantile paralysis, tuberculosis, and common colds. More than 50 per cent of the deaths from diphtheria, measles, and whooping cough take place among those children who are sick with these diseases before they reach their fifth birthday.

How can you protect your child against communicable diseases?

The first way to protect your child is to maintain his resistance by being sure he is in good health. This is one of the reasons for having him under the supervision of a physician. If he is underweight, has diseased tonsils or adenoids, decayed teeth, or any other physical defect, delaying the correction of the defects may lower his resistance and increase his susceptibility to infection.

The second way is to avoid every known chance of exposure to disease. Keep your child away from all persons who have whooping cough, measles, scarlet fever, infantile paralysis, tuberculosis, or colds; also from persons who are known to have been exposed to them.

The third way is to take advantage of immunization and vaccination against such diseases as diphtheria, typhoid fever, and smallpox. Immunization and vaccination make the body immune; that is, give to the body the power not to catch (or take) the specific disease.

How are communicable diseases caught?

1. Diphtheria is transmitted directly by personal contact and indirectly through articles freshly soiled with discharges from the nose and throat of a person sick with diphtheria—possibly also for a long time after his recovery, or through infected milk or milk products. There is a sure method of protecting against this disease through immunization with toxin-antitoxin. Your child should have been immunized soon after he was 6 months old. When he enters school he may be given the Schick test to discover whether he is still immune.

2. Smallpox is transmitted directly by personal contact and indirectly through articles soiled with discharges from the eruptions or with the body discharges; and it may be carried by flies. The value of vaccination has been proved. The process is usually painless and the scar hardly noticeable. Your child should have been

vaccinated soon after birth, preferably before teething; he should be vaccinated again before he enters school. This method probably gives lifelong protection.

3. Typhoid fever can be caught not only from a person who has this disease but occasionally for a long time after he has recovered. Such a person, who is still likely to give typhoid fever to others, is called a typhoid carrier and in some States is required to be quarantined until he ceases to be a carrier (as shown by laboratory tests of certain body discharges). Epidemics may occur from milk, water, or other foods that have become contaminated with the body discharges of a person who has typhoid or of a carrier; and flies can carry this disease. Protection is afforded through antityphoid vaccine. Many localities are free from typhoid fever; but if a case develops in the neighborhood or if your child must travel at an early age, consult your physician about having the vaccine given. Children who are over 1 year old are as likely to catch typhoid fever as adults are.

4. Measles is transmitted directly through personal contact and indirectly through articles freshly soiled with discharges from the nose and throat of the sick person. This is the most easily caught of all the communicable diseases (and is especially serious for babies). You should take special care not to expose your child to this disease; the best protection at present is prevention.

5. Whooping cough is transmitted directly through personal contact and indirectly through articles freshly soiled with discharges from the throat. No satisfactory preventive method has been found yet; the vaccine against it has not been proved reliable. Protect your child by keeping him away from children who have whooping cough. Quarantine against whooping cough, which is very serious (often fatal) in the case of very young children, may not be properly enforced everywhere. You should help in its enforcement so far as you can.

6. Scarlet fever is transmitted directly through personal contact and indirectly through articles freshly soiled with discharges from nose, throat, or ears of an infected person, or through contaminated milk or milk products. Some physicians are using an antitoxin that is generally accepted as having curative value. Antitoxin for prevention of scarlet fever is also in use.

7. Infantile paralysis is transmitted through discharges from the nose and throat and the bowel evacuations of infected persons, often also of persons many months after recovery. It may be present in the nose and throat of healthy persons who have been in contact with the disease. This disease may occur at any time of life, but it is most common in the second year. The three-week quarantine period affords some protection for the community, and you should help to have it enforced.

8. Tuberculosis may be transmitted through infection from a person who has the disease or through the milk of tuberculous cows. Tuberculosis may prove fatal to the young child, or it may remain quiescent for years and cause death later. Keep your child away from tuberculous persons, even if they belong to the immediate family and the separation is difficult. Unless you know that the milk you are giving to your child is from cows free from tuberculosis as shown by test, you should use milk that has been Pasteurized according to given standards. If neither of these precautions has been taken, then boil the milk 10 minutes.

9. Colds are transmitted by direct contact with persons who have colds and by touching their freshly-soiled handkerchiefs. They can result in such complications as broncho-pneumonia, chronic trouble in the nasal passages, and running ears. There is no great hope of restricting the spread of common colds until people realize that colds are very contagious and that they can catch cold by being sneezed or coughed on or by being kissed by those who have colds. Keep your child away from persons who have colds; the persons who have colds do not always show to others the consideration of keeping away from them.

Problems.

1. Is it dangerous to feed the baby from the mother's spoon? Why?
2. Why is it best to avoid taking little children to motion pictures, to any crowded place, or into stores?
3. If your child who is in school comes down with a cold or other communicable disease how can you keep the baby or runabout child from catching it?
4. Do you know how many cases there were last year in your town of diphtheria, measles, whooping cough, and scarlet fever? Were any deaths caused by these diseases among young children?
5. What is your community doing to protect its little children against the preventable diseases?
6. Auburn, N. Y., had no deaths from diphtheria over a three-year period. What preventive measure do you suppose was used in this city to guard the children against diphtheria?
7. What specific measures are you taking to protect your child against diphtheria, smallpox, and colds?

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