

Glossary

acute: An infection that has a sudden onset and lasts a limited period of time; usually days or a few weeks

antibody: A protein substance produced by the body's defense systems in response to something foreign. Antibodies help protect against infections

antigen: Any substance that is foreign to the body, such as a bacterium or virus. An antigen is capable of causing a response from the immune system

asymptomatic: Without symptoms. For example, a child may shed hepatitis A virus in the stool and not have symptoms, but still be able to infect others

bacterium/ bacteria: Organisms with a cell wall that can survive in and out of the body. They are much larger than viruses, and they can usually be treated effectively with antibiotics

bilirubin: A substance made in the liver. This substance increases in liver disease such as hepatitis and can cause yellowing of the skin and eyes (yellowing of parts of the body is called "jaundice")

bronchitis: An inflammation or swelling of the tubes leading into the lungs, often caused by a bacterial or viral infection

carrier: A person who is infected with a specific organism, who has no symptoms of disease and who can spread the disease to others. For example, some children may be carriers of the organisms Haemophilus influenzae or Giardia lamblia and have no symptoms

cellulitis: An infection involving the skin and area below the skin, caused by specific bacteria (e.g., Streptococcus, Staphylococcus and Haemophilus influenzae)

chronic: An infection or illness that lasts a long time (months or years)

cleaning: Removal of dirt and waste materials (blood, urine and feces) by scrubbing and washing with soap and water

conjunctivitis (pinkeye): Redness and swelling of the delicate tissue which lines the eyelids and covers the eyeball (conjunctiva)

contagious period (communicable period): The period of time when an infected person is capable of spreading infection to another person

contamination: The presence of infectious germs in or on the body, on environmental surfaces, on articles of clothing, or in food or water

croup: Spasms of the airway that cause difficult breathing and a cough sounding like a seal's bark. Croup can be caused by various bacteria and viruses

diarrhea: Increased number of stools compared with a person's normal pattern, along with watery stools, and/or decreased stool form. Uncontrolled diarrhea is diarrhea that cannot be contained by the diaper or use of the toilet

disinfection: Killing of germs outside of the body with chemical (e.g., bleach or alcohol) or physical (e.g., heat) agents. Surfaces should be cleaned first and then disinfected

dyspnea: Difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath

emesis: Vomiting

encephalitis: Inflammation (redness, swelling) of the brain which can be caused by a number of viruses including mumps, measles and varicella

enteric: Describing infections of the intestines (often with diarrhea)

epidemiology: The scientific study of the occurrence and distribution of diseases

epiglottitis: Tissue lid of the voice box. When this organ becomes swollen and inflamed (called epiglottitis), it can block breathing passages. Haemophilus influenzae is a common cause of epiglottitis

exclusion: Denying admission of an ill child or staff member to a facility

excretion: Elimination of waste material that is formed and not used by the body, such as feces and urine

febrile: Having a fever

fecal: Referring to feces or stool

fever: An elevation of body temperature

fomites: Any substance that absorbs or transmits infectious material

fungus/fungi: Plant-like organisms, such as yeasts, molds, mildew and mushrooms, which get their nutrition from other living organisms or from dead organic matter

hepatitis: Inflammation of the liver, usually caused by a virus. See hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis C fact sheets

hygiene: Protective measures taken by individuals to promote health and limit the spread of infectious diseases. These include:

- a. Washing hands with soap and running water after using the toilet, after handling anything contaminated, and before eating or handling food or after caring for another person
- b. Keeping hands, hair and unclean items away from the mouth, nose, eyes, ears, genitals and wounds
- c. Avoiding the use of common or unclean eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels, handkerchiefs, combs and hairbrushes
- d. Preventing exposure to droplets from the nose and mouth by covering the face when coughing or sneezing
- e. Keeping the body clean by frequent (at least daily) baths or showers using soap and water

icterus (jaundice): Yellowing of the skin or the whites of the eyes

immune globulin (gamma globulin): An antibody preparation made from human plasma. It provides temporary protection against diseases such as hepatitis A. For example, health officials may offer immune globulin injections to children and staff in a child care setting when cases of hepatitis A occur

immunity: The body's ability to fight a particular infection. For example, a child acquires immunity to disease such as measles, mumps, rubella and pertussis after natural infection or by immunization. Newborns initially have the same immune status as their mothers. This immunity usually disappears within the first six months of life

immunizations: Vaccines that are given to children and adults to help them develop protection (antibodies) against specific infections. Vaccines may contain an inactivated or killed agent, or a weakened live organism. Childhood immunizations include protection against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, Haemophilus influenza type b and hepatitis B. Adults need to be protected against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus and diphtheria

immunocompromised: The state of not having normal body defenses (immune responses) against disease caused by microorganisms

incubation period: Time between exposure to an infectious agent and beginning of symptoms

infection: When an infectious agent multiplies in the body

infectious: Capable of causing an infection

infested: When a parasite lives on the body, such as lice or scabies

influenza: An acute viral disease of the respiratory tract. Symptoms usually include a sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, dry cough and sore throat. Influenza should not be confused with Haemophilus influenza infection caused by bacteria, or with "stomach flu"

jaundice (icterus): Yellowing of the eyes or skin

malaise: A feeling of general discomfort, a feeling of not enough energy to do normal activities

meningitis: A swelling or inflammation of the tissue covering the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection

meningococcus: A bacterium named *Neisseria meningitidis* which can cause meningitis, pneumonia, arthritis or blood infections (see meningococcal disease fact sheet)

organisms: Living things; often used as a general term for germs (bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites) that can cause disease

otitis media: Inflammation or infection of the middle part of the ear. Ear infections are commonly caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* or *Haemophilus influenzae*. They are not contagious

parasite: An organism that lives on or in another living organism

pediculosis: Another word for lice infestation (see head lice disease fact sheet)

pneumonia: An infection of the lungs; usually not contagious

prophylaxis: Measures taken at the time of exposure to an infectious disease, or shortly thereafter, to try to prevent the disease. This may include medication or special immunization

rinse: To wash lightly, especially by dipping into clean water or by letting water run over, into or through

secretions: Wet material produced by cells or glands which has a specific purpose in the body, such as saliva

soiled: Contaminated with stool, urine, vomit, blood or saliva; eye, nose or wound drainage; or dirt

systemic: Pertaining to a whole body rather than to one of its parts

transmission: The passing of an infectious organism or germ from an infected animal, person or contaminated environment to a person

varicella: The virus that causes chickenpox and shingles

virus: A microscopic organism, smaller than bacteria, that may cause disease. Viruses can only grow or reproduce in living cells