

DIARRHEAL DISEASES*

Incubation, Signs and Symptoms

Incubation Period: Varies depending on causative agent.

Signs and Symptoms: An increased number of stools compared with the child's normal pattern with increased water and/or decreased form. Diarrhea may be accompanied by nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramping, headache and/or fever.

Methods of Transmission

Usually spread by person-to-person contact, in the majority of cases by fecal-oral route (ingesting very tiny amounts of fecal material from an infected person through contaminated hands or objects). Infection may possibly be from improperly refrigerated, reheated, or contaminated foods. Contaminated water and food are not usually the source of diarrhea in the school setting.

Minimum Control Measures

Communicable Period: Varies depending on causative agent. There is increased risk of disease for children in diapers and staff caring for these children.

Control: **Always EXCLUDE children and staff with diarrhea.** Children and staff should thoroughly wash hands after diaper changes and toilet use. Disposable table liners should be used on the changing table. Disinfect the changing table after each use. Educate staff regarding fecal-oral route of transmission. Caregivers who change diapers should not handle food.

Other Information

If two or more children or staff members (in one classroom) experience diarrhea within a 48-hour period, an infectious agent should be suspected. **NOTIFY THE DISTRICT NURSE OR YOUR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT.** Stool testing and treatment may be necessary.

*Any individual case of diarrhea due to bacteria, such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, *Shigella* or the protozoan *Giardia*, should have been reported to the local health department by the health care provider.

Schools should report unusual patterns or an increased number of diarrheal illnesses to the district nurse or to the local health department.

Schools or centers with outbreaks of diarrhea should contact their local health departments.