

Amherst Medical Practice

CHILDHOOD INFECTIOUS DISEASES

This is a page to see regarding some childhood infectious illnesses. It tells you the incubation period (The time between catching an illness and becoming ill), the infectious period (When the illness can be passed on to someone else), how to recognise it and what action to take. Just go down the page to the illness you want to read about.

Chickenpox

Incubation Period:

14 - 21 days

Infectious Period:

From the day before the rash appears until a week after last spot appears.

How to Recognise it:

Widespread rash of red spots over mainly trunk, becoming watery blisters which erupt over about 5 days, forming dry scabs lasting for a further 5 days or so.

What to do:

There is no need to see your doctor unless you are concerned as to the severity of the illness. Treat with Paracetamol for fever or discomfort. Wear loose clothing and use calamine lotion, or Piriton (antihistamine) for skin irritation.

Measles

Incubation Period:

7-12 days.

Infectious Period:

Three days before the rash appears and five days after it goes down.

How to Recognise it:

Starts with a bad cold with cough, fever and catarrh. After three to four days a major red blotchy rash will appear which is not itchy. Child will seem really quite unwell.

What to do:

See your doctor if you suspect measles as this can be a serious illness. Use Paracetamol and encourage fluids. Following the introduction of the MMR vaccine, measles is now rare.

Mumps

Incubation Period:

14 - 21 days.

Infectious Period:

From a few days before feeling unwell until swelling goes down. Possibly up to ten days.

How to Recognise it:

Starts with a swelling of one or more salivary glands below the ear lobe or under the chin. Painful to chew or when pressed. Can cause abdominal pain and soreness or swelling of the testicles in males. Occasional cause of meningitis.

What to do:

You do not need to see your doctor unless concerned, but do let us know so that we can record the illness in your notes. Mumps usually runs a mild course and is relieved by taking Paracetamol and fluids.

Rubella (German measles)

Incubation Period:

14 - 21 days.

Infectious Period:

From a few days before the illness starts until a week after rash first appears.

How to Recognise it:

Mild infectious disease causing a faint pink rash on the body that can last from a few hours to several days. Often associated with swollen neck glands. Quite difficult to diagnose with certainty. Dangerous to unborn babies of non-immune mothers who are in first fifteen weeks of pregnancy.

What to do:

Rubella is a notifiable disease so you should see your doctor. General symptoms are usually no more than for a cold. Use Paracetamol if required

Whooping Cough

Incubation Period:

7-14 days.

Infectious Period:

From first signs of illness until about six weeks after coughing first started, unless antibiotic is given.

How to Recognise it:

Infectious disease causing a prolonged and severe respiratory irritation with distinctive cough (a whoop). Much rarer now since widespread immunisation has been very effective in nearly eradicating the disease.

What to do:

A notifiable disease so you must see your doctor if you suspect it.

Call the Practice for further advice.