



Jackson County Health Department

Spread of Infectious Disease

Five Modes of Transmission



There are five modes of infectious disease transmission, airborne, blood borne/body fluid, droplet, direct contact, and fecal-oral. All disease follows one of these modes of transmission.

AIRBORNE DISEASE: Fine moist particles are coughed, sneezed or expelled into the air by an infected person and inhaled into the body of a susceptible person. **Example:** Influenza (flu), Chickenpox, Tuberculosis (TB), and Mumps
Prevention: A sick person should cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing, or cough into their elbow or shirt sleeve. They should wash their hands frequently with soap and water. Others should avoid contact with the person while they are ill.

BLOOD-BORNE/BODY FLUID: Some germs can spread when infected blood or certain body fluids enter another person's body. This can happen through shared needles or razors, sexual contact involving exchange of blood or sexual fluids, or when infected blood or body fluids come into contact with broken skin or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth). **Blood Borne Examples:** Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV
Prevention: Assume that all body fluids are infectious and avoid contact (wear gloves when in contact with blood and body fluids, use condoms or barriers during sexual intercourse). Clean surfaces with a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water (make this solution fresh daily). Never share needles, razors, or toothbrushes.

DIRECT CONTACT: Direct contact transmission occurs when germs spread through physical contact with an infected person, such as touching, hugging, kissing, or sexual contact. **Examples:** pinkeye, ringworm, scabies, lice, pinworms.
Prevention: Avoid direct skin-to-skin contact with individuals who have a known infection. Do not share personal items such as combs, brushes, hats, towels, bedding, or clothing.
Wash your hands promptly after touching an infected person or their belongings. Clean and disinfect items and surfaces that may have come in contact with the infection.

DROPLET (mucus and secretions): Sneezing and coughing spread the droplets from the nose, mouth and throat; these germ-filled secretions fall on all surfaces. When someone touches these infected surfaces they contaminate their hands, and then infect themselves by touching their own nose or mouth. Droplets hang in the air for a period of time.

Example: Common Colds


Prevention: The sick person should cover their mouth (with a disposable tissue or sleeve) when coughing or sneezing and then wash their hands. Dispose of used tissues in the trash container. Make sure to wash your hands with soap and water after touching items used by someone who is sick.

FECAL-ORAL: Very small particles of germs from feces may be on the hands of sick individuals after bowel movements. These small particles may be transferred to toilet handles, water faucets, door knobs, and food when touched by an ill person. Someone touching these same items or eating food prepared by an ill person may become ill.

Examples: Hepatitis A, Giardia, Shigellosis, Salmonella and E-Coli

Prevention: Clean potentially infected surfaces with a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water (make this solution fresh daily). Wash your hands after using the bathroom and immediately before preparing food. **Note: Infected food handlers, health care workers, and day care attendees or workers should be excluded until symptoms have subsided and stool samples test negative.**

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