



# GLOSSARY

## Disease Handbook for Childcare Providers

**Antibody** – A protein substance produced by the defense system in response to something foreign. Antibiotics help protect against infections.

**Asymptomatic** – Without symptoms. For example, a child may have the hepatitis A virus in the stool and not have symptoms, but will still be able to infect others.

**Bacteria/Bacterium** – One celled organism 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. Examples of bacteria include *Salmonella enteritidis* and *Bordetella pertussis*. Bacterium is singular, bacteria, plural.

**Bloodborne** – A disease that can be transmitted through the blood.

**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 organism *Haemophilus influenza* or *Giardia lamblia* and have no symptoms.

**Chronic** – An infection or illness that lasts a long time (i.e., months or years).

**Communicable** – When an infected person is capable of spreading infection to another person.

**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.

**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.

**Direct Contact** – Diseases that are spread by touching the infected area on another person's skin or occasionally by touching an object that is contaminated with infectious secretions or parasites.

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

**Enteric** – Describing infections of the intestines (often with diarrhea).

**Febrile** – Having a fever.

**Fever** – An elevation of body temperature.

**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; **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

# GLOSSARY (cont.)

coughing or sneezing; **e**) washing hands thoroughly after caring for another person; and **f**) keeping the body clean by frequent (at least daily) baths or showers using soap and water.

**Immunity** – The body’s ability to fight a particular infection. For example, a child acquires immunity to diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella and pertussis after natural infection or by immunization. Newborns initially have the same immune status as their mothers. This type of 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*, *hepatitis A*, *hepatitis B* and *varicella*. Adults need to be protected against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus and diphtheria, and chicken pox.

**Incubation Period** – Time between exposure to an infectious agent and the beginning of symptoms.

**Infection** – When an infectious agent multiplies in the body.

**Infectious** – Capable of causing an infection.

**Jaundice (icterus)** – Yellowing of the eyes or skin.

**Organisms** – Living things. Often used as a general term for germs (e.g., bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites) that can cause disease.

**Parasite** – An organism that lives on or in another living organism.

**Pathogen** – Disease causing organism.

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

**Purulent** – Forming or containing pus.

**Secretions** – Wet material produced by cells or glands, which has a specific purpose in the body, such as saliva.

**Systemic** – Pertaining to a whole body rather than to one of its parts.

**Transmission** – The passing of an infectious organism or germ from a source of infection to a person. (Examples: person-to-person or animal to person).

**Virus** – A microscopic organism, smaller than bacteria, which may cause disease. Viruses can grow or reproduce only in living cells. Examples of viruses include hepatitis B, HIV and the common cold. At this time there are no cures for viruses; doctors can only treat the symptoms.