

4. Preventive measures to be adopted by schools/centres against communicable diseases

Apart from general hygienic practice and vaccination, school/centre staff should adopt appropriate preventive measures against communicable diseases. These measures fall mainly into two major categories:

- Standard precautions
- Additional preventive measures according to different modes of transmissions

In addition, school/centre staff should maintain good communication with the parents/guardians and children to seek their support in preventing the diseases. They should advise parents/guardians to bring sick children to seek early medical advice and not to bring them to schools/centres, in order to minimise the chance of outbreak of communicable diseases in schools/centres.

4.1 Standard precautions

Standard precautions are designed to reduce the risk of transmission of infective agents from recognised or unrecognised sources of infection. They are applicable to all staff and children. When coming into contact or taking care of children, staff should regard all body fluids and excretions (including blood, saliva, sputum, vomitus, faeces, urine, and discharge from wounds and mucous membranes) as potentially infectious. They should adopt appropriate and relevant protective measures to reduce the risk of infection. They should pay particular attention to the following aspects:

- Hand hygiene
- Use of personal protective equipment
- Handling of contaminated articles

4.2 Hand hygiene

(Please refer to Section 3.1.1 for details.)

4.3 Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

To minimise the risk of infection or becoming the vector unknowingly, staff should use appropriate PPE at work according to the risk of the nursing procedure and the physical

condition of the children so as to safeguard themselves and others. Appropriate PPE should be stocked up.

4.3.1 Gloves

- Wear gloves when handling blood, body tissues, excreta, body fluids, secretions or any other contaminated wastes.
- Wear gloves before making contact with mucosa and wounds.
- Change gloves immediately if they are contaminated with secretions even when the same child is being nursed.
- Take off used gloves and perform hand hygiene immediately before nursing the next child so as to avoid transmission of infective agents from one to another or contamination of the environment.
- Perform hand hygiene immediately and thoroughly after taking off gloves. Please note that wearing gloves cannot be a substitute for hand hygiene.

4.3.2 Surgical masks, goggles and face shields

- Wear surgical masks and goggles/face shields to protect the mouth, nose and eyes from contamination by droplets via sneezing or coughing, blood spill, body fluids, secretions and excreta like sputum, urine or faeces when caring for a sick child.

4.3.3 Protective gowns

- Put on clean protective gowns (sterilised gown is not necessary) to protect the skin and prevent clothes from contamination by respiratory droplets, blood spill, body fluids, secretions and excreta like sputum, urine or faeces when caring for a sick child.
- Take off contaminated protective gown carefully and perform hand hygiene immediately afterwards to avoid the spread of infective agents.

4.3.4 Other PPE

- Other PPE such as caps can protect the hair from contamination by secretions and hence minimise the risk of transmission of infective agents from the staff to others.

4.4 Handling of contaminated articles

Used articles may become indirect vectors for infective agents. Appropriate precautionary measures should be taken while handling them.

4.4.1 Contaminated linen and clothing

- Infective agents can be transmitted through contact with linen and clothing. Therefore, wash all linen and clothing thoroughly before re-use. Put on appropriate PPE (e.g. gloves, masks and if appropriate, disposable gowns / aprons) during the process of handling.
- Handle the contaminated linen and clothing separately. Remove the bulky waste cautiously from all soiled linens first. Immerse the soiled linens in 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of 5.25% bleach with 49 parts of water) for 30 minutes. After that, follow the procedures for contaminated materials, namely remove the stains with detergent, rinse with water, dry, iron and store in clean and dry cabinets.
- Do not wash children's personal items/clothes in schools/centres. Put them into plastic bags for parents to take away.

4.4.2 Shared articles

- Clean and disinfect all shared articles before re-use to avoid cross-infection.
- If stained with blood, wipe the article with thick paper towels that have been dipped in 1 in 4 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of 5.25% bleach with 4 parts of water) and leave it for 10 minutes before cleansing and disinfection.
- Please refer to [Appendix 12](#) for cleansing and disinfection of articles commonly used in schools/centres .

4.5 Additional preventive measures according to different modes of transmissions

In addition to general hygiene practices, vaccination and standard precautions, specific preventive measures should be adopted when dealing with diseases with various modes of transmission. In order to avoid the spread of infections, sick children should avoid going to schools/centres. The suitable time for them to return to schools/centres depends on the nature of the diseases and the individual situations (please refer to [Appendix 13](#)).

Mode of transmission	Examples of diseases	Preventive measures
1. Contact transmission	Hand, foot and mouth disease, Acute conjunctivitis, Head lice, Scabies, Chickenpox [#]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep both hands clean and perform hand hygiene properly • Clean and disinfect items used by patients properly • Do not share towels and other personal items • Wear gloves when making contact with patients • Adopt proper isolation for the sick
2. Droplet transmission	Influenza, Common cold, <i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain good indoor ventilation • Keep both hands clean. In particular, perform hand hygiene properly and immediately after making contact with patients or handling respiratory secretions • Cover mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing, use tissue paper to contain respiratory secretions and dispose them in garbage bin with lid • People with respiratory infection symptoms and their close contact person should wear surgical masks • Keep a distance of at least one metre from the patient • Children and staff should seek medical advice immediately if they feel unwell • Adopt proper isolation for the sick • Use appropriate PPE when necessary

3. Air-borne transmission	Pulmonary tuberculosis, Measles, Chickenpox [#]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain good indoor ventilation • Children and staff should seek medical advice immediately if they feel unwell • Anyone with symptoms suggestive of air-borne transmissible diseases should not attend school.
4. Food-borne/ water-borne transmission	Viral gastroenteritis, Food poisoning, Cholera, Bacillary dysentery, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all food is adequately cooked especially high risk food like shellfish • Perform hand hygiene before meals and after going to the toilet • Handle vomitus and excreta properly • Food handlers if falling sick should refrain from work and seek medical advice early
5. Vector-borne transmission (usually insects)	Dengue fever, Malaria, Japanese encephalitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain environmental hygiene to prevent breeding of insects / mosquitoes, e.g. prevent accumulation of stagnant water • Take personal protection to prevent insect / mosquito bites, e.g. wear light-coloured, long-sleeved clothes and trousers and use insect repellents
6. Blood/body fluid-borne transmission	Hepatitis B, AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never share toothbrushes, razors or other objects possibly contaminated with blood • Follow standard precautions strictly when touching wound or blood contaminated object • Practise safe sex with proper use of condoms • Receive hepatitis B vaccination

[#]*Some diseases can be transmitted by more than one mode, e.g. chickenpox. To prevent the spread of such diseases, combined preventive measures should be adopted.*