

Medical guidance notes and information

Contagious Diseases

What is contagious disease?

Contagious disease is an infectious disease that can be transferred from one person or species to another by direct contact, contact with bodily fluids or with objects that an infected individual has contaminated. Contagious disease is also called communicable disease.

How can one become infected with a contagious disease?

People can be infected with contagious diseases in a number of ways.

- person to person either via:
 - bodily fluids e.g. hepatitis B;
 - direct contact e.g. measles, impetigo;
 - airborne contamination e.g. tuberculosis, influenza, measles and chickenpox;
 - objects that the infected individual has contaminated e.g. common cold.
- via contaminated food or water. e.g. Hepatitis A, Cholera;
- insect to human (e.g. Plague).

Prevention:

The spread of many contagious diseases is controlled through vaccination and good sanitation. There are some simple precautions that individuals can take in order to avoid becoming infected with a contagious disease:

- maintain good personal hygiene;
- wash your hands regularly with soap and water;
- avoid food and drink from suspicious sources;
- follow health advice given;
- be informed of health risks if travelling to foreign countries;
- immunisation against the contagious disease if a vaccine is available;
- use barrier methods when dealing with any suspected bodily fluids;
- practice safe sex.

Work and contagious disease

Generally the risk of being infected with a contagious disease at work should not be any greater than in any other environment provided that the above advice is followed.

If you are diagnosed with a contagious disease and your GP informs you that it is a notifiable disease, you should inform your line manager. Line managers should then contact Occupational Health for further advice.

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In the UK there is an extensive list of notifiable diseases under the Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 1988. Examples of some of these diseases are cholera, malaria, measles, meningitis, rabies and viral hepatitis. If anyone is diagnosed with a notifiable disease their GP will be responsible for notifying the Local Authority Proper Officer.

FURTHER GUIDANCE REGARDING INFECTIOUS DISEASES CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 34 IN THE LONDON UNDERGROUND EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK.

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