

WCHD Focus Report on Communicable Diseases

GLOSSARY

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Airborne disease	The transmission of disease causing microorganisms through the air to the human respiratory tract (usually the nose, mouth, throat, and lungs).
Antibiotics	A substance, such as penicillin or streptomycin, which can destroy or inhibit the growth of certain bacteria. Antibiotics are widely used in the prevention and treatment of bacterial, but not viral, infectious diseases.
Antidiarrheal medications	A class of drugs used to treat the causes and/or symptoms of diarrhea; watery stool, loose stool and various digestive upset including abdominal pain and bloating.
Antimicrobial drugs	Substances that kill or prevent the spreading of infectious agents or organisms in order to prevent the spread of infection.
Asymptomatic	A term used to describe an individual who does not currently show symptoms of the disease but who, in fact, may be infected. Asymptomatic individuals may develop symptoms of the disease at a later point in time if and when the disease onsets.
Asymptomatic carriers	A person or animal not currently showing the symptoms of a communicable disease but that can serve as a potential source of infection (also, see "carrier").
Bacterial disease	Infections and associated diseases caused by bacteria, general or unspecified.
Carrier	A person or animal that harbors a specific infectious agent without discernible clinical disease and serves as a potential source of infection. The carrier state may be of short or long duration (temporary or transient carrier, or chronic carrier).
Chronic disease	Any illness is called "chronic" if it is long-lasting or even lifelong. The opposite of chronic is "acute", referring to diseases that come on quickly and often do not last long (if they last, they are said to become "chronic").
Communicable disease Synonym: Infectious disease	An illness due to a specific infectious agent or its toxic products that is transmitted from an infected person, animal, or inanimate reservoir to a susceptible host.
Communicable disease rates	Refer to "incidence rate" and "prevalence rate."
Contact	A person or animal that has had an opportunity to acquire an infection by being within the environment of an infected individual.

Contagious	Capable of transmitting disease.
Contaminated	Impure or unclean because of contact with a communicable disease agent.
Contraceptive	A device, drug, or chemical agent that prevents conception and, in some instances, may help prevent the spread of a sexually transmitted disease.
Diagnosis	The act or process of identifying or determining the nature and cause of a disease or injury through evaluation of patient history, examination, and review of laboratory data. Also, the opinion derived from such an evaluation.
Dialysis	The process of cleansing waste products and removing excess water from the blood of patients whose kidneys have failed.
Disease investigation process	The process of controlling communicable disease by locating disease sources, carriers and at-risk groups to prevent, treat and thereby reduce the incidence and risk to citizens; to provide counseling to patients diagnosed positive for a communicable disease, and to provide information on disease etiology and the prevention of communicable diseases.
Dormant	A virus that is inactive in an infected individual or animal but may reactivate given the right circumstances.
Enteric diseases	Diseases of or relating to the intestines; "intestinal disease."
Exposure	To have contact with an infectious disease agent or its toxic products.
Feces Synonyms: Stool, "Poop"	The medical and scientific term for the "excrement discharged from the intestines."
Foodborne illness Synonym: Food poisoning	Any illness resulting from the consumption of food contaminated with pathogenic bacteria, toxins, viruses, prions, or parasites.
Gastrointestinal illness Synonym: Digestive diseases	Diseases of the digestive system, including diseases of the esophagus, stomach, large and small intestine, sigmoid colon, and rectum.
Genital ulcer diseases	A defect of the epithelial or mucosal surface of the genitals.
Genotype	The genetic makeup encoded in DNA.
Hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS)	One of the most common causes of sudden, short-term kidney failure in children. In severe cases, this acute kidney failure may require several sessions of dialysis to temporarily take over the kidneys' job of filtering wastes from the blood.
Immune system	The system (including the thymus and bone marrow and lymphoid tissues) that protects the body from foreign substances and pathogenic organisms by producing the immune response.

Immunizations Synonym: Vaccination, Shot	The administration of a weakened or killed form of a disease-causing agent to induce the body's immune system to produce antibodies against the disease, in the event of a future exposure to the specific disease-causing agent.
Incidence rate	The number of new cases of a specified disease during a defined period of time, divided by the number of persons in a stated population in which the cases occurred. This is usually expressed as cases per 1,000 or 100,000 per year. This rate may be expressed as age- or gender-specific or as specific for any other population characteristic or subdivision.
Incubation period	The time interval between contact with an infectious agent and onset of symptoms of disease.
Infectious disease	A clinically manifested illness of humans or animals resulting from an infection.
Infectious period	The length of time that a person or animal that harbors a communicable disease is able to transmit that disease to another person or animal.
Interventions	Communicable disease treatments aimed at curing the disease and halting its spread.
Intravenous drug users	Use of a drug by its injection into a vein.
Latent	A communicable disease that is hidden, dormant, inactive.
Malaise	A vague feeling of bodily discomfort, as at the beginning of an illness.
Notifiable condition Synonym: Reportable disease	A communicable disease that must be reported to state public health authorities by health providers, diagnostic laboratories and local health jurisdictions.
Outbreak	The occurrence of cases of a disease or condition in any area over a given period of time in excess of the expected number of cases.
Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)	A term used to describe inflammation or infection of the uterus, fallopian tubes, or ovaries (female pelvic organs). PID is usually caused by a bacterial infection, such as gonorrhea or chlamydia.
Prevalence rate	The total number of persons sick or portraying a certain condition in a stated population at a particular time (point prevalence), or during a stated period of time (period prevalence), regardless of when that illness or condition began, divided by the population at risk of having the disease or condition at the point in time or midway through the period in which they occurred.
Recurrence	The concept in general medicine that an illness may come back again.
Reservoir of disease	Any person, animal, arthropod, plant, soil or substance (or combination of these) in which an infectious agent normally lives and multiplies, on which it depends primarily for survival, and where it reproduces itself in such manner that it can be transmitted to a susceptible host. A reservoir of disease is any person, animal, or thing (fomite) which can contain the cause of a disease without suffering from it.

Sexually-transmitted disease (STD) Synonym: Venereal disease	Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are a group of various diseases that are spread by sexual contact.
Stool	See Feces
Strain	The type or subtype of a bacteria or virus.
Surveillance	Surveillance of disease is the continuing scrutiny of all aspects of occurrence and spread of a disease that are pertinent to effective control.
Symptomatic	A term used to describe an individual who shows symptoms of a disease.
Transmission	Any mechanism by which an infectious agent is spread from a source or reservoir to a person.
Unpasteurized	When milk or other types of liquid foods/nutrients have not been specifically processed to prevent, reduce, or eliminate the presence of pathogens, either through heat pasteurization or another process.
Vaccine-preventable disease	A disease that can potentially be prevented through the immunization process that stimulates the body's natural resistance to the disease.
Vector	In medicine, a vector is a carrier of disease agents.
Viral infection	The disease state resulting from the invasion of the body by a virus that can cause illness in humans.
Waterborne bacterial disease	An illness due to infection with bacteria from a contaminated water supply.