Communicable Illness Awareness

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What is a communicable illness?
- This describes an illness caused by an infection (viral or bacterial) that can pass from one person to another.
- These infections can vary from being very mild (head cold) to very severe (meningitis).
- The modes of transmissions may include:
  - Direct skin contact (Staphylococcal infection, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea),
  - Respiratory droplets, from coughing or sneezing (head cold, influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis),
  - Sharing oral / throat secretions (Strep throat, Mono, Meningococcal Disease) or
  - Exposure to infected blood (HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C).
- Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick. That means that you can pass an infection to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

What can you do to prevent communicable illness - Practice good hygiene:
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water or use of alcohol-based hand rubs.
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- Use a barrier (e.g., clothing or a towel) between your skin and shared equipment; and wiping surfaces of equipment before and after use.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unclean hands
- Encourage people around you to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Do not put anything in your mouth that has been in someone else’s mouth
- Talk to your health care provider concerning any available vaccines that may prevent of decrease the severity of a communicable illness
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

For more information:

www.cdc.gov

www.who.org

www.safety.louisiana.edu