

## Understanding Common Infectious Diseases in Schoolchildren



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The weather in Hong Kong can be unpredictable, and combined with children's weaker immune systems, they are prone to various illnesses. Moreover, children learn and play together at school, making it easy for infectious diseases to spread. Therefore, parents must have a certain understanding of common infectious diseases among schoolchildren to take necessary preventive measures and avoid infections.

In Hong Kong, schoolchildren's infectious diseases can be categorized based on their mode of transmission:

### 1. Droplet Transmission

Children can inhale droplets expelled by an infected person when they sneeze, cough, spit, or talk. They may also touch surfaces contaminated with pathogens and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth, allowing the virus to enter their bodies and cause infection. Common illnesses include upper respiratory infections (commonly referred to as colds), influenza, and hand, foot, and mouth disease.

### 2. Contact Transmission

This occurs when viruses are transmitted through direct contact with an infected person's body, such as skin-to-skin contact. The most common example is hand, foot, and mouth disease.

### 3. Airborne Transmission

Pathogens can remain suspended in the air for a period, entering the human body through the respiratory system without direct contact. Common diseases transmitted this way include chickenpox and measles.



#### 4. Hygiene-Related Infections

Some infectious diseases arise from improper personal hygiene, such as urinary tract infections or gastroenteritis (commonly referred to as stomach flu).

##### Handling Infectious Diseases

When a child contracts any infectious disease, they should not attend school. Firstly, the child may encounter more viruses at school or further weaken their immune system. Secondly, for public health considerations, it is essential to prevent the spread of the virus. Parents should allow their children to rest at home and return to school only after recovery. Additionally, parents can take preventive actions early, such as ensuring their children receive vaccinations against diseases like influenza or chickenpox, which can effectively prevent infections.

Parents should teach their children to avoid contact with classmates who have colds and to wash their hands frequently, using hand sanitizers appropriately to maintain personal hygiene. They should also instruct their children not to share cups or utensils to prevent cross-infection.

If a school suspects that a student has an infectious disease, teachers should remind the affected student to wear a mask, cover their mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, and should try to isolate the student while properly handling any bodily fluids. Parents should be informed to take the child to see a doctor.