

INCUBATION AND CONTAGIOUS PERIODS

The incubation period is the time between when a person is exposed to germs and when they develop symptoms. Or, “the time between sharing a soda with your friend who has a cold, and beginning to sneeze and blow your nose.” The contagion period is the window in which a person can pass germs on to another person.

Here’s a guide to common incubation and contagion periods.

DISEASE	INCUBATION PERIOD	CONTAGION PERIOD
Colds	1-5 days	Onset of runny nose until fever is gone.
Fifth Disease	4-14 days	7 days – Frequently cold-like symptoms will appear.
Pink eye	1-3 days	Onset of pus until 24 hours on antibiotic eye drops.
Sore throat, viral	2-5 days	Onset of sore throat until fever is gone.
Strep throat	2 – 5 days	Most people with strep are contagious until they have been on antibiotics 24-48 hours. Thus, they should stay home from school, daycare or work until they have been on antibiotics for at least a day. If they don’t an antibiotic, they’re contagious for 2 to 3 weeks after the onset of a sore throat.
Vomiting (viral)	2 – 5 days	Until vomiting stops.