Antibiotic resistance is a serious public health problem. Some bacteria that are capable of causing serious disease are becoming resistant to most commonly available antibiotics. Antibiotic resistant bacteria can spread from person to person in the community or from patient to patient in hospital. Careful infection control procedures can minimise spread of these bacteria in hospitals. Good personal hygiene can minimise spread of these bacteria in the community. Careful prescribing of antibiotics will minimise the development of more antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria.

Antibiotic medications are used to kill bacteria, which can cause illness and disease. They have made a major contribution to human health. Many diseases that once killed people can now be treated effectively with antibiotics. However, some bacteria have become resistant to commonly used antibiotics.

Antibiotic resistant bacteria are bacteria that are not controlled or killed by antibiotics. They are able to survive and even multiply in the presence of an antibiotic. Most infection-causing bacteria can become resistant to at least some antibiotics. Bacteria that are resistant to many antibiotics are known as multi-resistant organisms (MRO).

Antibiotic resistance is a serious public health problem. It can be prevented by minimising unnecessary prescribing and overprescribing of antibiotics, the correct use of prescribed antibiotics, and good hygiene and infection control.

Some bacteria are naturally resistant to some antibiotics. For example, benzyl penicillin has very little effect on most organisms found in the human digestive system (gut).

**Bacteria resistant to antibiotics**

Some bacteria have developed resistance to antibiotics that were once commonly used to treat them. For example, Staphylococcus aureus (‘golden staph’ or MRSA) and Neisseria gonorrhoeae (the cause of gonorrhoea) are now almost always resistant to benzyl penicillin. In the past, these infections were usually controlled by penicillin.

The most serious concern with antibiotic resistance is that some bacteria have become resistant to almost all of the easily available antibiotics. These bacteria are able to cause serious disease and this is a major public health problem. Important examples are:

- methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)
- vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus (VRE)
- multi-drug-resistant Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MDR-TB)
- carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE)
- gut bacteria

**Ways to prevent antibiotic resistance**

The most important ways to prevent antibiotic resistance are:

- Minimise unnecessary prescribing and overprescribing of antibiotics. This occurs when people expect doctors to prescribe antibiotics for a viral illness (antibiotics do not work against viruses) or when antibiotics are prescribed for conditions that do not require them.
- Complete the entire course of any prescribed antibiotic so that it can be fully effective and not breed resistance.
- Practise good hygiene such as hand-washing and use appropriate infection control procedures.

**Transmission of antibiotic resistant bacteria in hospitals**

The common ways in which bacteria can be passed from person to person include:

- contact with contaminated hands of hospital staff
- contact with contaminated surfaces such as door handles, over-bed tables and call bells
- contact with contaminated equipment, such as stethoscopes and blood pressure cuffs.

**Infection control in hospitals**

Standard precautions in hospitals are work practices that provide a basic level of infection control for the care of all people, regardless of their diagnosis or presumed infection status.

These precautions should be followed in all hospitals and healthcare facilities and include:

- good personal hygiene, such as hand washing before and after patient contact and the appropriate use of alcohol-based hand rub solutions.
the use of barrier equipment such as gloves, gowns, masks and goggles
appropriate handling and disposal of sharps (for example, needles) and clinical waste (waste generated during patient care)
aseptic (sterile) techniques.

Implementing standard precautions minimises the risk of transmission of infection from person to person, even in high-risk situations.

Additional precautions with antibiotic resistant bacteria

Additional precautions are used when caring for people who are known or suspected to be infected or colonised with highly infectious pathogens (micro-organisms that cause disease).

Micro-organisms may be classed as ‘high risk’ if:
- their transmission route makes them more contagious – they may be spread through contact or droplets, or may be airborne
- they are caused by antibiotic resistant bacteria
- they are resistant to standard sterilisation procedures.

Additional precautions are tailored to the particular pathogen and route of transmission. Additional precautions may include:
- use of a single room with ensuite facilities or a dedicated toilet
- dedicated care equipment for that person
- restricted movement of the person and their healthcare workers.

Transmission of antibiotic resistant bacteria in the community

Antibiotic resistant bacteria can also be passed from person to person within the community. This is becoming more common.

Ways to prevent transmission of organisms, including antibiotic resistant bacteria, are:
- Wash hands before and after food handling, going to the toilet and changing nappies.
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing.
- Use tissues to blow or wipe your nose.
- Dispose of tissues properly, either in the rubbish or toilet.
- Do not spit.
- Stay at home if you are unwell and cannot manage the normal requirements of your day.
- Do not send children to child care, kindergarten or school if they are unwell.
- If you are prescribed antibiotics, take the entire course – do not stop because you are feeling better.
- If you continue to feel unwell, go back to the doctor.
- Avoid use of products that advertise they contain antibiotics, or are antibacterial or antimicrobial, unless advised to do so by your health professional.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Pharmacist
- Community health centre

References


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Infections

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Infection explained
- Preventing infections
- Managing infections
- Childhood infections
- Animal to human infections
- A-Z of infectious disorders

Infection explained

- Antibiotic resistant bacteria
  Careful prescribing of antibiotics will minimise the emergence of antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria...
- Beat the Bite
Beat the Bite is a Victorian government health campaign to highlight awareness of the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria. Find resources to be printed and shared along with videos that tell...

- Chest infections
  A chest infection affects your lungs, either in the larger airways (bronchitis) or in the smaller air sacs (pneumonia).

- Fever
  A mild fever up to 39°C can actually help the immune system to get rid of an infection.

- Immunisation history statements for children
  By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria.

- Infection risk - cardiac surgery and mycobacteria
  Mycobacterium chimaera is a type of bacterium known as a non-tuberculous mycobacterium (NTM). There is a risk that heater cooler units (HCUs) used in cardiac (heart) surgery may be contaminated with.

- Infections – bacterial and viral
  Many bacterial infections can be treated with antibiotics, but they are useless against viral infections.

- Who provides immunisations in Victoria
  Immunisations in Victoria are provided by local councils, GPs and specially qualified nurses in medical clinics and community health services, some Maternal and Child Health nurses, travel clinics and.

Preventing infections

- Antibacterial cleaning products
  The Western obsession with cleanliness may be partly responsible for the increase in allergic asthma and conditions such as rhinitis.

- Beat the Bite! Mosquito-borne disease risk and management (video)
  Dr Finn Romanes, public health doctor at Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services explains the department’s program to monitor and manage the risks associated with Mosquitoes. Learn about the.

- Food safety while travelling
  Travelling, eating and drinking go together but unfortunately, traveller's diarrhoea and other food-related illnesses can sometimes come along for the ride.

- Handwashing - why it's important
  Washing your hands with soap and warm water can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

- Home tattooing
  Home tattooing, or getting tattoos overseas, puts you at risk of serious complications that can be debilitating and life-long.

- Immunisation history statements for children
  By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria.

- Kissing and your health
  While disease-causing bugs can be transferred during a kiss, most won't cause disease and the risk of serious disease is very small.

- Personal hygiene
  Good personal hygiene is one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves and others from illness.

- Pets – safe handling of reptiles and tropical fish
  People in contact with tropical fish and reptiles such as turtles, lizards and snakes may be at risk of infections and illness due to germs (such as bacteria, viruses and parasites) carried on the.

- Piercings
  If you want to have your body pierced, choose an experienced, registered practitioner to reduce the risks of infection and scarring.

- Preventing healthcare associated infection (HAI)
  There are things you can do to reduce the chance of getting an infection while you are in hospital.

- Quarantine at home - coping tips
  You may be asked to quarantine yourself at home if you have developed, or been exposed to, an infectious disease.
Tattoos
If you want to get a tattoo, choose an experienced, registered practitioner to reduce the risks of infection and scarring.

Time to immunise - free vaccines for men who have sex with men
Immunisation is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others from infectious diseases in our community. In partnership with Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), the...

Travel health and safety tips (slide show)
We all love travelling to new and exotic places, but unfortunately illnesses and unforeseen events can ruin the trip of a lifetime. With a little effort, take a few of these simple precautions to make...

Travel immunisation
If you are travelling overseas, check with your doctor well in advance to find out what immunisations you need...

Vaccines
Vaccines trick the body into building immunity against infectious diseases without causing the actual disease.

Who provides immunisations in Victoria
Immunisations in Victoria are provided by local councils, GPs and specially qualified nurses in medical clinics and community health services, some Maternal and Child Health nurses, travel clinics and...

Workplace safety - infection control
The spread of many pathogens in the workplace can be prevented with regular hand washing.

Managing infections
- Antibiotic resistant bacteria
  Careful prescribing of antibiotics will minimise the emergence of antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria.

- Handwashing - why it's important
  Washing your hands with soap and warm water can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

- Medicines and side effects
  Complementary medicines can interact with pharmaceutical medicines.

- Medicines - safety issues
  Make sure your doctor knows about every medicine you take, including vitamins.

- Preventing healthcare associated infection (HAI)
  There are things you can do to reduce the chance of getting an infection while you are in hospital.

- Quarantine at home - coping tips
  You may be asked to quarantine yourself at home if you have developed, or been exposed to, an infectious disease.

- Workplace safety - infection control
  The spread of many pathogens in the workplace can be prevented with regular hand washing.

Childhood infections
- Beat the Bite
  Beat the Bite is a Victorian government health campaign to highlight awareness of the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria. Find resources to be printed and shared along with videos that tell...

- Boils
  Some areas of the body are more susceptible to boils, including the face, throat, armpits, groin and buttocks.

- Chickenpox
  Chickenpox is highly contagious, but it is generally mild and gets better without the need for special treatment.

- Coughing and wheezing in children
  Coughing and wheezing in babies can be distressing for you and your baby, but in most cases symptoms can be relieved at home.
- Croup
  Croup is a viral infection of the throat and windpipe that causes noisy breathing, a hoarse voice and a harsh, barking cough.

- Diphtheria
  Diphtheria is a serious bacterial disease that causes severe inflammation of the nose, throat and windpipe.

- Fever - children
  Fever is a way in which the body fights infection. A fever is not dangerous and does not always indicate a serious illness.

- Fever - febrile convulsions
  A febrile convulsion is a fit that occurs in children when they have a high fever.

- Gastroenteritis in children
  Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhoea (runny or watery poo) and...

- Hand, foot and mouth disease
  Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of hand, foot and mouth disease to others, both for those infected and their carers.

- Impetigo - school sores
  Impetigo, or school sores, is a highly contagious skin infection that commonly affects school-aged children.

- Measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox) – immunisation
  Immunisation is the best protection against measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox).

- Melissa's story (video)
  Melissa shares her story of how her baby caught chickenpox at 5 weeks old.

- Meningitis
  Meningitis can cause death and requires urgent medical attention.

- Middle ear infections
  Middle ear infections often happen during or after a child has a cold.

- Mumps
  Mumps is a viral illness that causes fever and swollen salivary glands, and a swollen face.

- Roseola infantum
  Roseola is a mild viral infection with associated fever and rash that affects babies and young children.

- Rubella
  Rubella is a mild illness for most people, but very dangerous for pregnant women and their babies.

- Slapped cheek disease
  Children with slapped cheek do not need to be kept home from school or day care, as cases are only contagious before the onset of the rash.

- Streptococcal infection – group B
  Group B streptococcal bacteria can cause a wide range of illnesses in susceptible people including newborns, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes or cancer. Out...

- Viral encephalitis
  Viral encephalitis is inflammation of the brain caused by a virus and can cause permanent brain damage.

- Whooping cough
  The major symptom of whooping cough is a severe cough, which is often followed by a 'whooping' sound.

- Whooping cough – a family’s experience (video)
  A family shares their experience when their baby daughter contracted whooping cough (or pertussis).

Animal to human infections

- Anthrax
Antibiotic resistant bacteria

Anthrax is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial disease that occasionally infects humans.

- Australian bat lyssavirus (ABL-V)
  The simplest form of prevention for lyssavirus is to avoid close contact with bats.

- Barmah Forest virus disease
  Barmah Forest virus (BFV) disease can cause joint inflammation and pain, fatigue and a rash of variable appearance. A full recovery can be expected. Most people recover completely within six months.

- Beat the Bite
  Beat the Bite is a Victorian government health campaign to highlight awareness of the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria. Find resources to be printed and shared alone with videos that tell...

- Beat the Bite! Mosquito-borne disease risk and management (video)
  Dr Finn Romanes, public health doctor at Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services explains the department’s program to monitor and manage the risks associated with Mosquitoes. Learn about the...

- Bird flu (avian influenza)
  The symptoms of bird flu in humans are similar to those of regular influenza.

- Dengue virus disease
  Dengue virus disease (denuefever, or ‘denue’) is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes in many tropical and subtropical parts of the world.

- Hendra virus
  The best defence against Hendra virus is to avoid contact with an infected horse.

- Leptospirosis
  Leptospirosis is a disease spread from animals to humans, caused by infection with the bacteria Leptospira.

- Malaria
  Travellers who visit malarial locations should avoid mosquito bites and take anti-malarial drugs.

- Mosquitoes can carry diseases
  You can reduce the risk of mosquito bites if you get rid of potential mosquito breeding sites around your home.

- Murray Valley encephalitis
  The only protection from Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) is to avoid mosquito bites.

- Pets – safe handling of reptiles and tropical fish
  People in contact with tropical fish and reptiles such as turtles, lizards and snakes may be at risk of infections and illness due to germs (such as bacteria, viruses and parasites) carried on the...

- Pinworms
  Despite the unsavoury reputation, a pinworms infection (worms) is relatively harmless and easily treated.

- Psittacosis - parrot fever
  People who have birds as pets, poultry workers and anyone working in aviaries or pet shops, are most at risk of catching psittacosis.

- O fever
  O fever is caused by a micro-organism that can be carried by cattle, sheep and goats.

- Ross River virus disease
  Most people recover from Ross River virus disease, although some people have symptoms for a year or more.

- Tapeworms and hydatid disease
  It's important for your own health to control tapeworm infection in your dog.

- Toxoplasmosis
  Problems only occur if a woman becomes infected with parasites that cause toxoplasmosis for the first time while pregnant.

- West Nile virus
  All disease-carrying mosquitoes breed in water or require water to enable eggs to hatch.

- Zika virus

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A-Z of infectious disorders

- **Zika virus** is a mosquito-borne virus. There is no cure, specific treatment or vaccine for Zika virus.

- **Anthrax**
  Anthrax is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial disease that occasionally infects humans.

- **Aspergillus**
  Aspergillus is a fungus that commonly grows on rotting vegetation. It can cause asthma symptoms.

- **Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV)**
  The simplest form of prevention for lyssavirus is to avoid close contact with bats.

- **Bacterial vaginosis**
  Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is caused by an imbalance of the bacteria normally present in the vagina.

- **Barmah Forest virus disease**
  Barmah Forest virus (BFV) disease can cause joint inflammation and pain, fatigue and a rash of variable appearance. A full recovery can be expected. Most people recover completely within six months.

- **Beat the Bite**
  Beat the Bite is a Victorian government health campaign to highlight awareness of the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria. Find resources to be printed and shared along with videos that tell...

- **Botulism**
  Botulism is considered a medical emergency. If untreated, it may cause death.

- **Burch ulcer**
  Since the ulcer gets bigger with time, early diagnosis and prompt treatment of Bairnsdale disease can keep skin loss to a minimum.

- **Candida auris (C. auris)**
  Candida is a genus of fungi (yeasts) that live on the skin and inside the human body. Candida auris (also called C. auris) is an uncommon fungus that can cause serious infections.

- **Cellulitis**
  Cellulitis is a bacterial infection of the skin that occurs most commonly on the lower legs and in areas where the skin is damaged or inflamed.

- **Chest infections**
  A chest infection affects your lungs, either in the larger airways (bronchitis) or in the smaller air sacs (pneumonia).

- **Chickenpox**
  Chickenpox is highly contagious, but it is generally mild and gets better without the need for special treatment.

- **Chlamydia**
  Chlamydia is often called the 'silent infection' because most people do not realise they have it.

- **Colds**
Cold viruses are spread by sneezing, coughing and hand contact...

- Cold sores
  Cold sores are blisters around the mouth and nose, caused by the herpes simplex virus...

- Coughing and wheezing in children
  Coughing and wheezing in babies can be distressing for you and your baby, but in most cases symptoms can be relieved at home...

- Croup
  Croup is a viral infection of the throat and windpipe that causes noisy breathing, a hoarse voice and a harsh, barking cough...

- Cystitis
  Cystitis is the most common urinary tract infection in women...

- Cytomegalovirus (CMV)
  If an unborn baby gets CMV from their mother, it can cause hearing loss and intellectual disability...

- Dengue virus disease
  Dengue virus disease (dengue fever, or ‘dengue’) is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes in many tropical and subtropical parts of the world...

- Diarrhoea
  Acute diarrhoea in babies and young children can be life-threatening...

- Diphtheria
  Diphtheria is a serious bacterial disease that causes severe inflammation of the nose, throat and windpipe...

- Ebola virus disease (EVD)
  Ebola virus is a rare disease that can cause severe symptoms and can be life-threatening...

- Epididymitis
  Epididymitis is an infection that causes inflammation of the epididymis...

- Eyes - trachoma
  A clean face and clean environment are the best protection against trachoma...

- Fatigue fighting tips
  Activity and nutrition help fight fatigue and put more energy into your daily life...

- Fever - children
  Fever is a way in which the body fights infection. A fever is not dangerous and does not always indicate a serious illness...

- Fever - febrile convulsions
  A febrile convolution is a fit that occurs in children when they have a high fever...

- Flu (influenza)
  Influenza (the flu) is caused by a virus. The flu is more than just a bad cold and can occasionally lead to serious complications, including death. Specific antiviral medication is available. It is...

- Food poisoning - listeria
  Listeria infection is uncommon but very dangerous for the elderly, people whose immune systems are not working properly and pregnant women and their unborn babies...

- Gastroenteritis
  It is important to establish the cause of gastro, as different types of gastroenteritis respond to different treatments...

- Gastroenteritis - amoebiasis
  Amoebiasis can cause diarrhoea among travellers to developing countries...

- Gastroenteritis - campylobacteriosis
  Campylobacteriosis is a type of gastroenteritis and is more common in children under five years of age and young adults...

- Gastroenteritis - cryptosporidiosis
Outbreaks of cryptosporidiosis have been associated with child care centres, public swimming pools and contaminated water supplies.

- **Gastroenteritis - giardiasis**
  Most people infected with Giardia parasites do not develop symptoms but can still spread the infection to others.

- **Gastroenteritis in children**
  Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhoea (runny or watery poo) and...

- **Gastroenteritis - salmonellosis**
  You may be more prone to salmonellosis if you are elderly, have another medical condition (such as a weakened immune system) or are malnourished.

- **Gastroenteritis - shigella**
  Outbreaks of shigella gastroenteritis can occur in institutional settings, particularly where children are still in nappies or adults are incontinent.

- **Genital herpes**
  Many people with genital herpes are not aware that they have the infection, because they have no symptoms.

- **Genital warts**
  Genital warts are one of the most common sexually transmissible infections.

- **Glandular fever**
  Glandular fever is most common among high school and university students, but young children can also become infected by saliva on toys, shared cups, or the hands of carers.

- **Gonorrhoea**
  Gonorrhoea, also spelt gonorrhea, affects both men and women and is transmitted during sex, it may lead to infertility in women if left untreated.

- **Haemolytic uraemic syndrome**
  Haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS) is a rare condition which can lead to chronic kidney damage or death from kidney failure.

- **Hand, foot and mouth disease**
  Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of hand, foot and mouth disease to others, both for those infected and their carers.

- **Heart conditions - endocarditis**
  Endocarditis is an infection of the heart valves or the inner lining of the heart.

- **Hendra virus**
  The best defence against Hendra virus is to avoid contact with an infected horse.

- **Hepatitis**
  Hepatitis is an umbrella term for several diseases that affect the liver.

- **Hepatitis A**
  Immunisation is the best protection against hepatitis A infection and it is recommended for people in high-risk groups.

- **Hepatitis B**
  Hepatitis B is a viral infection that affects the liver and can lead to serious illness or death.

- **Hepatitis C**
  In Australia, hepatitis C is most often spread through the sharing of unsterile drug injecting equipment. New all oral combination treatment has greatly improved health outcomes for people with.

- **Hepatitis C Cure - what it means for Victorians (video)**
  Hepatitis C Cure - what it means for Victorians.

- **HIV**
  In Australia, HIV is most commonly spread when having sex without a condom and when sharing needles and other injecting equipment.

- **Impetigo - school sores**
  Impetigo, or school sores, is a highly contagious skin infection that commonly affects school-aged children.

- **Labyrinthitis and vestibular neuritis**

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Labyrinthitis and vestibular neuritis are disorders that result in inflammation of the inner ear and the nerve connecting the inner ear to the brain.

- **Legionnaires' disease**
  
  Legionnaires' disease is a rare form of pneumonia.

- **Leprosy (Hansen’s disease)**
  
  Once a person with leprosy begins treatment they quickly become non-infectious.

- **Leptospirosis**
  
  Leptospirosis is a disease spread from animals to humans, caused by infection with the bacteria Leptospira.

- **Leprosy (Hansen’s disease)**
  
  Once a person with leprosy begins treatment they quickly become non-infectious.

- **Malaria**
  
  Travellers who visit malarial locations should avoid mosquito bites and take anti-malarial drugs.

- **Measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox) – immunisation**
  
  Immunisation is the best protection against measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox).

- **Meningitis**
  
  Meningitis can cause death and requires urgent medical attention.

- **Meningococcal disease**
  
  Do not leave young adults alone if they suddenly develop a fever because they may become seriously ill very quickly.

- **Molluscum contagiosum**
  
  Molluscum contagiosum can be mistaken for genital warts or pimples, check with your doctor for an accurate diagnosis.

- **Mosquitoes can carry diseases**
  
  You can reduce the risk of mosquito bites if you get rid of potential mosquito breeding sites around your home.

- **Mumps**
  
  Mumps is a viral illness that causes fever and swollen salivary glands, and a swollen face.

- **Murray Valley encephalitis**
  
  The only protection from Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) is to avoid mosquito bites.

- **New drugs for the treatment of hepatitis C – Frequently Asked Questions for patients**
  
  In Australia, hepatitis C is most often spread through the sharing of unsterile drug injecting equipment. New all oral combination treatment has greatly improved health outcomes for people with.

- **Osteomyelitis**
  
  Osteomyelitis means an infection of bone which can either be recent or longstanding.

- **Parechovirus**
  
  Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of parechovirus to others, both for those infected and their carers.

- **Pérididitits**
  
  Pericarditis symptoms may be similar to those of heart attack and include chest pain and abnormal heart rhythms.

- **Pets – safe handling of reptiles and tropical fish**
  
  People in contact with tropical fish and reptiles such as turtles, lizards and snakes may be at risk of infections and illness due to germs (such as bacteria, viruses and parasites) carried on the.

- **Pinworms**
  
  Despite the unsavoury reputation, a pinworm infection (worms) is relatively harmless and easily treated.

- **Pleurisy**
  
  Treating any infection of the upper respiratory tract quickly will reduce the risk of developing pleurisy.

- **Pneumococcal disease**
  
  Pneumococcal disease is a leading cause of serious illness and death in young children.

- **Pneumonia**
  
  Anyone can get pneumonia, but young children and the elderly are most susceptible.
• Polio and post-polio syndrome
  Polio is a serious disease that can cause life-threatening paralysis and possibly death...

• Psittacosis - parrot fever
  People who have birds as pets, poultry workers and anyone working in aviaries or pet shops, are most at risk of catching psittacosis...

• Q fever
  Q fever is caused by a micro-organism that can be carried by cattle, sheep and goats...

• Reactive arthritis
  Reactive arthritis is a form of arthritis that occurs as a result of some bacterial infections...

• Rheumatic fever
  Untreated rheumatic fever can lead to serious complications such as rheumatic heart disease...

• Roseola infantum
  Roseola is a mild viral infection with associated fever and rash that affects babies and young children...

• Ross River virus disease
  Most people recover from Ross River virus disease, although some people have symptoms for a year or more...

• Rotavirus
  Rotavirus is a common cause of viral gastroenteritis for Australian babies and preschool children...

• Rubella
  Rubella is a mild illness for most people, but very dangerous for pregnant women and their babies...

• Salpingitis
  Salpingitis is one of the most common causes of female infertility and may permanently damage the fallopian tubes...

• Septicaemia
  Bacteria in the bowels, urinary tract, mouth and skin can cause disease if they get into the bloodstream...

• Shiga toxin-producing E.coli
  There are many types of E.coli bacteria, most of which are harmless. However, some types of E.coli produce toxins (poisons) that can cause gastroenteritis (gastro). One of these types of E.coli is...

• Shingles
  Shingles is caused by the same virus responsible for chickenpox...

• Slapped cheek disease
  Children with slapped cheek do not need to be kept home from school or day care, as cases are only contagious before the onset of the rash...

• Smallpox
  Smallpox was once a feared and highly contagious viral disease...

• Staphylococcus aureus - golden staph
  Hospital patients are more likely to be infected by golden staph because of surgical or other wounds...

• Streptococcal infection - group A
  Streptococcal infection group A can cause sore throats (pharyngitis), scarlet fever or impetigo (school sores)...

• Streptococcal infection - group B
  Group B streptococcal bacteria can cause a wide range of illnesses in susceptible people including newborns, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes or cancer. Out...

• Styes
  Styes may be red and sore, but they generally do not cause any damage to the eye or eyelids...

• Swimmer's ear
  Swimmer's ear can be triggered by exposure to water or mechanical damage due to overzealous cleaning...
• Tapeworms and hydatid disease
  It's important for your own health to control tapeworm infection in your dog...

• Tetanus
  Tetanus is a life-threatening disease and immunisation is the best way to reduce your risk...

• Time to immunise - free vaccines for men who have sex with men
  Immunisation is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others from infectious diseases in our community. In partnership with Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), the...

• Tinea
  Tinea is contagious and can be spread by skin-to-skin contact or indirectly through towels, clothes or floors...

• Toxic shock syndrome (TSS)
  If you think you could have toxic shock syndrome, stop using tampons immediately and go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital...

• Toxoplasmosis
  Problems only occur if a woman becomes infected with parasites that cause toxoplasmosis for the first time while pregnant...

• Travel health - yellow fever immunisation
  If you are travelling or passing through areas infected with yellow fever, some countries require you to be vaccinated...

• Tuberculosis (TB)
  Tuberculosis is spread when a person with an active infection coughs, laughs, sings or sneezes...

• Urinary tract infections (UTI)
  Urinary tract infections (UTIs) can target the urethra, bladder or kidneys...

• Vaginal thrush
  Vaginal thrush is a common infection caused by an overgrowth of yeasts in the vagina...

• Viral encephalitis
  Viral encephalitis is inflammation of the brain caused by a virus and can cause permanent brain damage...

• Viral haemorrhagic fever
  Viral haemorrhagic fever (VHF) is an extremely infectious and life threatening disease caused by a group of viruses, including the Ebola virus...

• Warts
  Warts can be stubborn, so you may need to use more than one type of treatment...

• West Nile virus
  All disease-carrying mosquitoes breed in water or require water to enable eggs to hatch...

• Whooping cough
  The major symptom of whooping cough is a severe cough, which is often followed by a 'whooping' sound...

• Whooping cough – a family’s experience (video)
  A family shares their experience when their baby daughter contracted whooping cough (or pertussis).

• Williams syndrome
  Williams syndrome often goes undiagnosed, which means that some people with the disorder fail to get the support and treatment they need until later in life...

• Zika virus
  Zika virus is a mosquito-borne virus. There is no cure, specific treatment or vaccine for Zika virus...

Related Information

• Flu (influenza)
  Influenza (the flu) is caused by a virus. The flu is more than just a bad cold and can occasionally lead to serious complications, including death. Specific antiviral medication is available. It is...

• Bird flu (avian influenza)
The symptoms of bird flu in humans are similar to those of regular influenza...

- **Antibacterial cleaning products**
  
  The Western obsession with cleanliness may be partly responsible for the increase in allergic asthma and conditions such as rhinitis...

- **Fever**
  
  A mild fever up to 39°C can actually help the immune system to get rid of an infection...

- **Immunisation history statements for children**
  
  By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria...

**Related information on other websites**

- Australian Government, Department of Health and Ageing.
- Children's Hospital Westmead.
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- VICNISS Coordinating Centre - Patient information.

**Content Partner**

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Department of Health and Human Services - RHP&R - Health Protection - Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit

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