

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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Rash Illness

What is a Rash?

A rash involves a change in the color and/or texture of an area of skin. Some rashes may show specific patterns on the skin. A rash may be associated with a contagious disease.

What should I do if I have a Rash?

A rash may be a symptom of a contagious or non-contagious disease. See your doctor if you have a rash.

How long after exposure do symptoms first begin?

A person's symptoms will depend on the cause of the rash. See fact sheets specific to rash illnesses, for example: chicken pox, measles, hand foot & mouth disease, strep throat/scarlet fever, etc.

How are Rashes spread?

Rashes are spread in many different ways. Rash illnesses such as scarlet fever (strep throat), chicken pox and measles may be spread in the air by coughing and sneezing. Some rashes such as impetigo, ringworm, and herpes can be spread by direct contact or touch. Rashes can also be a symptom of an allergic reaction to chemicals, food, medications and plants.

How are Rashes prevented?

Prevention of rashes varies greatly depending on the cause of the rash. Here are some examples of ways to prevent diseases that may cause rashes:

- Keep immunizations (shots) up-to-date.
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing. Wash hands after using a tissue for a cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water.
- Avoid direct contact with rash on someone else's body.
- Try not to touch or scratch a rash on your body.

Are there complications?

Serious and/or life threatening complications may result from a rash illness.

Is there a treatment?

Treatment for a rash depends on the cause. A doctor may prescribe:

- Rest with no medication
- Use of medication
- Discontinuation of a medication or use of a household product.

Anyone with a rash illness should be seen by their doctor to ensure proper treatment. Exclusion from work or school may be necessary until the cause of the rash is diagnosed by a doctor.

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HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:

- use soap and running water
- rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- wash all surfaces, including:
 - backs of hands
 - wrists
 - between fingers
 - under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands with a paper towel
- turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands

For more information on Rash Illness, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.

For additional copies, visit our website at www.oakgov.com/health.