

AWARENESS OF THE EFFECTS OF CONTAGIOUS DISEASES IN SCHOOL

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Contagious diseases like influenza, measles, chickenpox, hand, foot, and mouth disease, and conjunctivitis are common during summertime. These diseases can significantly impact students' learning development.

Contagious diseases, also known as infectious diseases, can quickly spread person-to-person or getting close contact, with respiratory droplets like sneezing and touching contaminated objects.

The classroom setting is a perfect environment for transmitting these diseases because of the air circulation and ventilation.

Here are the key effects of contagious diseases in schools.

- Due to the outbreak of contagious diseases, students may increase the number of absences. This may lead to a delay in the learning progress of the students.
- In severe cases, some schools may be forced to temporarily close to prevent the disease.
- Some contagious diseases may lead to other health complications. Students with weakened immune systems tend to have more serious health complications, especially young children.
- Students who catch these diseases may have an impact on social and emotional aspects. The fear that they can transmit a disease may lead to stress and anxiety.

How to prevent the spreading of contagious diseases in school

- **Vaccination.** Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of these diseases. The school may encourage parents to have students vaccinated. The Department of Health (DOH) has a yearly program coordinating every school in the country to give free vaccination of Measles, Rubella, Tetanus, and Diphtheria (MR-TD) shots to Grade one pupils with parents' consent.
- **Hand Hygiene.** Students are encouraged to wash their hands frequently with soap and water to prevent the spreading of germs. Schools provide hand washing facilities to practice proper hygiene. Department of Education (DepEd) promotes this project under the Wash-IN School (WINS) program.
- **Respiratory Etiquette.** Teachers teach respiratory etiquette like covering the mouth with a tissue or handkerchief when coughing and sneezing.
- **Cleaning and Disinfection.** Schools have regular disinfection every day, especially in classrooms with disease cases. The Municipal Health Office- Municipal Epidemiology Surveillance Unit (MHO-MESU) scheduled and performed a deep disinfection in the whole school to reduce the risk of transmission.

Increasing awareness of the effects of the spreading of these contagious diseases helps to minimize the impact on the learners' physical, intellectual, social, and emotional aspects. By understanding these effects, the school may plan preventive strategies to protect students on their health and well-being.

References:

S. Funk, E. Gilad, C. Watkins, & V.A.A. Jansen, The spread of awareness and its impact on epidemic outbreaks, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 106 (16) 6872-6877, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0810762106> (2009).