

## Prevention of Contagion

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First aid teaches that utmost care should be exercised to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, also called contagious or infectious diseases. Microscopic bodies, called germs, so small that millions of them unperceived may gain entrance to the body through the throat, nose and skin, passing from person to person, are one cause of the spreading of disease. In vigorous health their presence does no harm, as they do not find a soil suitable to their growth, but in failing health, in weakness, in a slight cold, inflammation of depressed vitality, a place is found where they can lodge, grow and multiply. Secreted upon or excreted from the diseased body they are carried with infected material from person to person.

These germs cling to clothing, bedding, carpets, and to the hair and skin of animals. They cling to walls, find their way into food, milk, meats, fruits, decomposing matter and drains. Damp, mouldy places are rich soil for their propagation. They may be carried through the air on the bodies of insects. All persons and all things may become carriers of the seeds of disease.

The attending physician will give specific instructions in all cases of communicable disease. First aid teaches what should be done while awaiting these instructions, and then only instructs upon measures tending to prevent the spread of disease, not the treatment of the disease, which should always be looked after by the physician.

The most effective means for the control, prevention and ultimate eradication of communicable diseases are isolation—the separation of the sick from the well; disinfection—destruction of infection, and in the case of smallpox, vaccination.

Here are a few suggestions on how to avoid contagious diseases, condensed from Johnson's First Aid Manual:

- Avoid sitting down in the sick room, especially upon the bed.
- Wash the hands with antiseptic soap after each contact with the sick.
- Exercise regularly, in the open air if possible.
- Avoid the breath of a sick person.
- Eat or drink nothing that has been in the sick room.
- Do not go into the sick room with an empty stomach.
- Do not wear a patient's clothing.
- Kill or drive out of the sick room all flies or other insects and destroy all mosquitoes.
- Do not sweep the sick room—scrub it.