

Eureka Journal of Health Sciences & Medical Innovation (EJHSMI)

ISSN 2760-4942 (Online) Volume 2, Issue 1, January 2026



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<https://eurekaoa.com/index.php/5>

NURSING CARE IN CHILDHOOD INFECTIOUS DISEASES

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Abstract

Infectious diseases in children are prevalent due to the relative immaturity of their immune systems and can lead to significant morbidity. Nursing care in pediatric infectious diseases encompasses early detection, appropriate management of therapy, symptom support, infection control, and preventive measures. Pediatric nurses play critical roles in assessing the child's condition, monitoring vital signs, administering medications on time, implementing isolation and infection prevention protocols, and educating parents on recognizing symptoms, hygiene practices, and immunization importance. Effective prevention strategies, particularly vaccination and hygiene education, are essential for reducing disease incidence. Well-organized nursing care significantly contributes to improving child health outcomes, mitigating disease severity, and preventing complications.

Keywords: Child health, infectious diseases, nursing care, pediatrics, infection control, isolation, prevention, vaccination, patient care, hygiene, parent education, complication prevention, symptom assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Protecting child health is one of the most important priorities of modern healthcare systems. Among the major challenges in pediatrics, infectious diseases remain a leading cause of morbidity and hospitalization in children worldwide. Because a child's immune system is not fully developed, children are more

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susceptible to viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites than adults. This vulnerability makes childhood infectious diseases not only a medical issue but also a social and public health concern. If not detected and managed in time, such diseases can result in severe complications, delayed physical and psychological development, and even mortality. Globally, common infectious diseases in children include measles, chickenpox, pertussis (whooping cough), influenza, acute respiratory infections, gastrointestinal infections, hepatitis A, and meningitis. These diseases spread mainly through airborne droplets, direct contact, contaminated food, and water. Environments such as kindergartens, schools, and playgrounds facilitate rapid transmission due to close interaction among children. In many regions, outbreaks continue to occur because of insufficient vaccination coverage, poor hygiene practices, overcrowding, and limited awareness among parents and caregivers. Several risk factors contribute to the high incidence of infectious diseases in children. Malnutrition weakens the immune response, making children more prone to infection. Inadequate sanitation and unsafe drinking water increase the risk of intestinal infections. Environmental pollution, climate change, and socioeconomic conditions also influence disease patterns. Furthermore, delayed medical consultation and self-treatment by parents often worsen the clinical course. Therefore, preventing and managing childhood infections requires not only medical intervention but also comprehensive nursing care and community education. Nursing care plays a central role in the management of infectious diseases in children. Nursing is not limited to administering medications; it includes holistic care that addresses the physical, emotional, and social needs of the child. Pediatric nurses are often the first healthcare professionals to assess the child's condition. They monitor vital signs such as temperature, respiratory rate, pulse, oxygen saturation, and level of consciousness. Continuous observation allows early detection of complications and timely communication with physicians. One of the primary responsibilities of nurses in pediatric infectious diseases is infection control. Proper isolation of

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infected children, use of personal protective equipment, hand hygiene, environmental cleaning, and disinfection are essential to prevent the spread of pathogens within healthcare facilities and households. Nurses ensure that these protocols are followed strictly. By doing so, they protect not only the patient but also other children, family members, and healthcare staff. Another important aspect of nursing care is the safe and timely administration of treatment. Nurses prepare and give medications according to prescriptions, monitor for side effects, manage intravenous therapy, and ensure adequate hydration and nutrition. In children with fever, nurses implement cooling measures and observe the child's response to therapy. Nutrition support is also critical, as proper feeding strengthens immunity and supports recovery. Nurses adapt care according to the child's age, weight, and clinical condition. Psychological support is especially important in pediatric care. Hospitalization and illness can cause fear, anxiety, and stress in children. Nurses use age-appropriate communication, comfort measures, and reassurance to reduce emotional distress. Establishing trust with both the child and parents improves cooperation during treatment and enhances recovery outcomes. Family-centered care, in which parents actively participate in the child's care, is a key principle of modern pediatric nursing. Parent education is another major responsibility of nurses. Parents must understand the nature of the disease, modes of transmission, medication schedules, hygiene practices, and warning signs that require urgent medical attention. Nurses provide guidance on home care, isolation procedures, nutrition, and follow-up visits. Educating families helps prevent reinfection and reduces the risk of community spread. Prevention is a cornerstone of managing childhood infectious diseases. Vaccination remains the most effective strategy for preventing diseases such as measles, rubella, pertussis, poliomyelitis, and hepatitis. Nurses participate actively in immunization programs, record keeping, monitoring adverse reactions, and counseling parents about vaccine safety and benefits. In addition, promoting handwashing, safe food practices, clean water use, and healthy

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lifestyles forms part of preventive nursing practice. Community-based nursing is also expanding. Nurses work in schools and community centers to conduct screening programs, vaccination campaigns, and health education sessions. Teaching children basic hygiene practices such as handwashing, respiratory etiquette, and safe food consumption reduces infection transmission at the community level. Nurses also identify vulnerable populations and provide targeted interventions. In conclusion, childhood infectious diseases continue to pose significant challenges to global health. Effective management requires more than medical treatment alone; it demands comprehensive, well-organized nursing care. Nurses play a vital role in assessment, infection control, treatment administration, psychological support, parent education, and prevention. Strengthening pediatric nursing practice contributes to reducing disease severity, preventing complications, and improving overall child health outcomes. Therefore, understanding and developing nursing care strategies in childhood infectious diseases is essential for modern healthcare systems.

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