

- **Prodromal symptoms** (symptoms that occur between early manifestations of the disease and its overt clinical syndrome) or evidence of constitutional symptoms, such as a fever or rash (see [Table 6-1](#))
- Immunization history
- History of having the disease

Immunizations are available for many diseases, and infection usually confers lifelong immunity; therefore, the possibility of many infectious agents can be eliminated based on these two criteria.

## Prevent Spread

Prevention consists of two components: prevention of the disease and control of its spread to others. **Primary prevention** rests almost exclusively on immunization.

Control measures to prevent spread of disease should include techniques to reduce risk of cross-transmission of infectious organisms between patients and to protect health care workers from organisms harbored by patients. If the child is hospitalized, follow the facility's policies for infection control. The most important procedure is hand washing. Persons directly caring for the child or handling contaminated articles must wash their hands and practice effective Standard Precautions in care of their patients.

Instruct the child to practice good hand washing technique after toileting and before eating. For those diseases spread by droplets, instruct the parents in measures to reduce airborne transmission. The child who is old enough should use a tissue to cover the face during coughing or sneezing; otherwise, the parent should cover the child's mouth with a tissue and then discard it (see [Box 6-1](#)). Stress the usual hygiene measures of not sharing eating and drinking utensils to the family.

### Nursing Alert

If a child is admitted to the hospital with an undiagnosed exanthema, institute strict Transmission-Based Precautions (contact, airborne, and droplet) and Standard Precautions until a diagnosis is confirmed. Childhood communicable diseases