
Hepatitis B

Description: Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus. The virus is found primarily in the blood of an infected person and occasionally in some other body fluids. It is more common in adults than in children.

Symptoms: If present, symptoms may include vague abdominal discomfort, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, fever, tiredness, joint pain, dark urine, light stools and yellow skin or eyes (jaundice).

How it is Spread: Hepatitis B is not easily spread. Spreading occurs in a child care setting primarily when infected blood or saliva enters through a cut or scraped area on the skin, or mucous membranes (like the lining of the mouth).

Incubation Period: 6 weeks to 6 months.

How Long Can a Person Pass the Infection? For an acute infection, six months regardless of whether symptoms are present. For the carrier state, it can be contagious for longer than six months, possibly for life. Responsibilities of Parents and Caregivers:

- Notify the local health department (See ODH Communicable Disease Chart).

It is not necessary to exclude children with hepatitis B from child care because it is not spread by casual contact such as occurs in schools and child care settings.

Control of Spread:

- Wear disposable vinyl or latex gloves when handling blood or blood-contaminated bodily fluids. Wash hands after removing gloves. Child care staff must use standard precautions.
- Use proper hand washing and sanitizing techniques.
- Make sure all children use good hand washing practices.
- Try to prevent scratching, biting or fighting.
- Do not allow anyone else to use the child's toothbrush and nail clippers.

Treatment: There is no treatment available. Prevention of hepatitis B is possible through a series of three injections of vaccine.

Hepatitis B Vaccine: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends all infants receive the vaccine during the first 18 months of life. Child care staff who work with blood or blood-contaminated body fluids or developmentally delayed or aggressive children should be immunized with three injections, the same as the children.