Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that affects the liver. About 50% of adults and 90% of children with the infection have no symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they may include fever, tiredness, stomach pain, nausea, dark urine and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice).

In some cases, hepatitis B can lead to liver damage or liver cancer.

How it spreads

Hepatitis B spreads through contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids. The virus can survive outside the body for up to 7 days, so surfaces or objects contaminated with blood or saliva can also spread the virus.

Hepatitis B does **not** spread through food or water, or through ordinary social contact.

Vaccination against hepatitis B is part of the routine childhood vaccination schedule in the Australian National Immunisation Program.

Exclusion period

Not excluded – people with hepatitis B can attend the service.

Actions for educators and other staff

Routinely check the vaccination status of children and staff.

Follow standard procedures for handling blood and body fluids, as you may not know if someone has the virus.

Make sure your service has a protocol for managing exposure to blood, body fluids or needlestick injuries.

Cover open wounds with a waterproof dressing (like a plastic adhesive strip) to reduce exposure to blood.

Actions for parents and carers

If your child has been diagnosed with hepatitis B, follow your doctor's advice and keep your child at home until they are feeling better.

Cover any cuts or wounds with a waterproof dressing (like a plastic adhesive strip).

See your doctor if you or any family members have not been vaccinated.

More information about hepatitis B

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis B (healthdirect.gov.au/hepatitis-b).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.