

# HEPATITIS B

**\*\*Reportable to local or state health department\*\***

This fact sheet is for provider information only. If you have questions, please call the health department.

It is rare for children to be infected with hepatitis B with the exception of those children infected by their mothers during pregnancy or childbirth. These children may have a lifelong infection (chronic infection). Children who have chronic hepatitis B infection may be attending childcare or school; however, spread of hepatitis B in these settings is very rare.

**CAUSE** Hepatitis B virus.

**SYMPTOMS** Loss of appetite, tiredness, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, dark (tea or cola-colored) urine, light-colored stools, and sometime rash or joint pain. Jaundice (yellowing of eyes or skin) may be present in adults, but it is uncommon in young children. Symptoms vary greatly from none at all to severe illness. Adults have symptoms more often than children.

**SPREAD** Virus is present in the blood and other body fluids that may contain blood. It can be spread person-to-person when blood from an infected person enters an open cut or splashes into the eye or mouth of another person, by sharing any equipment to inject drugs or puncture the skin, such as tattooing or body piercing, or through sexual contact. Although virus can be found in saliva, the amount of virus in the saliva is so low that spread is very unlikely. It can also be spread from a mother to her baby during pregnancy or childbirth.

**INCUBATION** It takes from 6 weeks to 6 months, usually 2 to 3 months, from the time a person is infected with hepatitis B virus until disease signs and symptoms occur.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD** May be infectious for many weeks before onset of symptoms and remain infectious for 4 to 6 months. People with chronic hepatitis B infection are considered infectious for life.

**EXCLUSION** Childcare and School: None, unless the hepatitis B-infected child has unusually aggressive behavior (e.g., biting) that cannot be controlled, oozing sores that cannot be covered, or bleeding problems. A team of medical experts should assess on a case-by-case basis to determine whether exclusion from some activities is necessary.

**TREATMENT** Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider.

## PREVENTION/CONTROL

- All infants should receive the three-dose hepatitis B vaccine series as part of their routine immunizations. Nevada School Immunization Law requires children entering kindergarten and seventh grade to show proof of hepatitis B vaccination or have a legal exemption.

- Childcare providers/school staff should discuss the need for hepatitis B vaccine with their healthcare provider.
- Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for unvaccinated adolescents and adults who are at risk for exposure to blood borne pathogens in their work or personal life.
- Persons recently exposed to blood or bloody body fluids from an infected person should contact their healthcare provider or the local or state health department immediately regarding the possible need for hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) and hepatitis B vaccine.
- Cleaning and disinfecting of blood and body fluid spills:
  - Surfaces and objects contaminated with blood or bloody body fluids must be cleaned with soap or detergent and water and then disinfected immediately. Hepatitis B virus, as well as other infectious germs, may be found in the blood and other bloody body fluids of any person, even when there are no symptoms to suggest infection is present.
  - Wear disposable medical gloves when handling blood (nosebleeds, cuts) or items, surfaces, or clothing soiled by blood or bloody body fluids, or when there are open sores, cuts, or abrasions on the hands.
  - Wash hands immediately after contact with any body fluids, even if gloves have been worn. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water. Thorough hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
- DO NOT allow sharing of toothbrushes, nail clippers, or razors.

**For more information, please contact your local health department.**

[Carson City Health & Human Services](#) (Carson City, Douglas, Lyon Counties) 775-434-1690 & 775-887-2190 (after hours)

[Central Nevada Health District](#) (Churchill, Mineral, Eureka, Pershing Counties) 775-866-7535

[Northern Nevada Public Health](#) (Washoe County) 775-328-2447 (24 hours)

[Southern Nevada Health District](#) (Clark County) 775-759-1300 (24 hours)

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