

Hepatitis B Infection

(Acute and Chronic)*



Clinical Description:

Hepatitis B is a serious disease of the liver that results from infection with the hepatitis B virus. Symptoms can include malaise, anorexia, fever, nausea, right upper quadrant abdominal pain, myalgia, jaundice and light-colored stools. Children usually have mild symptoms, such as anorexia or nausea and may be asymptomatic. Most people infected with hepatitis B virus will recover without any complications. However, some may develop chronic (long-term) hepatitis B infection that can lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer, liver failure, and death.

Incubation Period:

The incubation period is usually 45 - 180 days with an average of 60 - 90 days.

Mode of Transmission:

Hepatitis B is transmitted when blood or other body fluids, such as semen and vaginal secretions from an infected person, come in direct contact with a susceptible person's mucous membranes, broken skin, or through contact with a contaminated sharp object. Infection also has been acquired through human bites.

Period of Communicability:

A person can spread hepatitis B 1-2 months before and after the onset of symptoms. Persons with chronic hepatitis B infections are carriers of the virus. An indication of communicability is the presence of hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) in a person's blood.

Exclusion/Reporting:

Infected students should be receiving care from a provider during both the chronic and acute stages of the disease. According to Indiana law (IC 16-41-9-3), children may not be excluded from school activities based solely on their hepatitis B status. However, based on the severity of the symptoms which may exist, for the comfort and success of the student, adjustments to typical classroom and school related activities and attendance may be necessary. For other information on laws and rules regarding hepatitis B infection see the ISDH Communicable Disease Reporting Rule (410 IAC 1-2.3) at [http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/comm_dis_rule\(1\).pdf](http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/comm_dis_rule(1).pdf).

Prevention/Care:

- There is a safe and effective vaccine that can prevent hepatitis B infection. When the immunization series is administered with success, studies indicate that immunologic memory remains intact for more than 25 years and confers protection against clinical illness and chronic HBV infection.
- School immunization requirements for hepatitis B can be found at in the "Document Center" of the Indiana State Department of Health CHIRP web site
- Equipment contaminated with blood or other potentially infectious body fluids (or both) shall be appropriately disinfected or sterilized prior to reuse (see Rule 410 IAC 1-2.3-73(3)). Universal precautions to prevent exposure to blood and body fluids should be practiced.

Outbreaks:

According to the ISDH Communicable Disease Reporting Rule (410 IAC 1-2.3-37) the definition of an outbreak means cases of disease occurring in a community, region, or particular population at a rate in excess of that which is normally expected. The local health department should be notified of suspected and/or documented cases of hepatitis B if the number of cases is in excess of what is normally experienced in your school or occur with a common connection (same class, sports team, etc.). For additional information and recommendations regarding the preparation for, and the management of an outbreak situation in a school setting, see Appendix A, "Managing an Infectious Disease Outbreak In a School Setting."

Other Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

<http://www.cdc.gov/Hepatitis/ChooseB.htm>

Hepatitis B Foundation:

<http://www.hepb.org>

Indiana State Department of Health Quick Fact (found on disease/condition page):

<http://bit.ly/12lJLfD>

* Acute infections are required to be investigated under the Communicable Disease Reporting Rule; it is strongly recommended that chronic infections be reported and investigated as well.