



# HEPATITIS B GUIDANCE

Following discussions with Oxfordshire County Council's Occupational Health team and having considered the information available, the following guidance regarding the vaccination of staff against contracting Hepatitis B has been developed.

## What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a viral infection of the liver, which follows a very variable course. The virus (HBV) can cause an acute illness that resolves itself quickly without causing long-term liver damage. However, in about 20% of cases it causes a chronic illness that lasts more than six months, sometimes for life, with symptoms that come and go and which can lead to very serious illness.

Hepatitis B is not very common in the UK, with new infections occurring in about 7 out of every 100,000 of the population every year, usually in adults.

The virus is usually transmitted through contact with infected blood or body fluids. Only a tiny amount of blood is needed to transmit the virus because it's so infectious.

More information can be found on the NHS Direct website.

## What are the risks?

At school the main risks come from dealing with blood and body fluids as part of managing personal care routines and providing first aid, or in some cases from the behaviour of the pupils. In particular children who bite or scratch.

The Department of Health "Green Book" (Updated 2016) states:

**"Staff of residential and other accommodation for those with learning difficulties: A higher prevalence of chronic hepatitis B infection has been found among individuals with learning difficulties in residential accommodation than in the general population. Close, daily living contact and the possibility of behavioural problems may lead to residents being at increased risk of infection."**

The Health and Safety Executive's "Blood-borne viruses in the workplace" (2001) states:

"These viruses can also be found in bodily fluids other than blood, for example semen, vaginal secretions and breast milk. Other body fluids or materials such as urine, faeces, saliva, sputum, sweat, tears and vomit carry a minimal risk of BBV infection, unless they are contaminated by blood. Care should be taken as the presence of blood is not always obvious.

## Reducing the risks:

The Health and Safety Executive's "Blood-borne viruses in the workplace" (2001) states:

"Immunisation (vaccination) is available against HBV but not other BBVs. The need for a worker to be immunised should be determined by the risk assessment. It should only be seen as a supplement to reinforce other control measures."

These other control measures should include but are not limited to:

- Following the appropriate protocols when dealing with bodily materials and in particular when dealing with blood.
- Completing a risk assessment of pupil behaviour and identifying appropriate measures to reduce risk when working with children who may bite or scratch, such as wearing long sleeved clothing where possible.
- Following personal hygiene routines, such as washing hands regularly and thoroughly and keeping work areas clean.

It is important to state that Oxfordshire's Occupational Health team considers the risk of contracting HBV in schools to be low, but that does not mean that you may be at increased risk depending upon which particular class you are working in. Therefore if you fall into any of the following groups, the school will pay for you to be vaccinated against HBV. If you do not fall into any of these groups but consider yourself to still be at increased risk then please discuss this with your class teacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team in order to identify either ways of reducing the risk or to consider the need for vaccination.

Whilst the school will aim to have all staff vaccinated in time, the priority will be given to those staff working regularly in the following contexts:

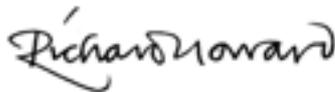
- With any pupil who is known to be carrying Hepatitis B
- With any pupil who has an IMP indicating that they are known to bite or scratch
- Pool staff (due to contact with all pupils and the fact that their work clothing provides reduced protection against bites/scratches)
- In addition to this any member of staff who suffers a broken skin injury can request vaccination.
- As staff move classes, those who have not been vaccinated but find themselves working within any of the above contexts can request vaccination.

The cost of vaccination will be met by the school.

**Reviewed by:** Matt McArthur

**Date:** January 2017

**Approved by Governors:**



**Date:** 30.1.17