



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

PREVENTION OF THE TRANSMISSION OF VIRAL HEPATITIS

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Index

Introduction	Page 3
Confidentiality	Page 3
Discrimination	Page 3
Safe work practices for staff	Page 4
Immunisation of staff against viral hepatitis	Page 8
Responsibilities under this policy	Page 10
Appendix 1 Further information concerning viral hepatitis	Page 13
Appendix 2 References	Page 14

PREVENTION OF THE TRANSMISSION OF VIRAL HEPATITIS

INTRODUCTION

The NSW Department of Education and Training is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all employees.

This policy provides information on safe work practices for staff, immunisation procedures, responsibilities of principals, TAFE NSW managers and staff in schools and TAFE NSW colleges and campuses.

NSW Health has advised that teachers and other staff in the Department of Education and Training are at low risk of contracting viral hepatitis at work. Notwithstanding, it is essential that infection control procedures are maintained to ensure that the risk is kept as low as possible.

If you require further information regarding this policy, please contact:

- for school and district office staff, the staff welfare officer in your district office;
- for TAFE NSW staff, the institute occupational health and safety officer in your institute; or
- for state office staff, the Staff Welfare Unit.

NSW Health recommends that individuals requiring further information about hepatitis should speak to their doctor or the Hepatitis C Council of NSW (on 1800 803 990). Other useful contacts are included in Appendix 1 of this policy.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is important that the confidentiality of staff or students with viral hepatitis is respected.

Staff, students or school community members who have viral hepatitis (including hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis C) are not required to inform the school or TAFE institute. In accordance with Section 19 of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*, if a person does choose to inform the school or TAFE institute, this information must not be disclosed except with the express consent of the individual concerned (or his or her parent, guardian or caregiver).

Further advice may be obtained from the Department's Freedom of Information and Privacy Unit on telephone (02) 9561-8519.

DISCRIMINATION

Staff or students who have contracted an infectious disease are not to be disadvantaged or discriminated against in any way.

SAFE WORK PRACTICES FOR STAFF

Standard infection control precautions involve the routine wearing of gloves and other protective clothing and equipment, as appropriate, to protect staff from potentially infectious blood and other body substances. This is especially important if staff have any broken skin or a skin condition which could allow entry of virus particles.

Standard precautions are designed to reduce the risk of transmission of all blood-borne pathogens, including hepatitis B and hepatitis C, from both recognised and unrecognised sources of infection.

Standard infection control precautions include:

Hand washing and hand care

- Hand washing and hand care are important measures in infection control. Staff should wash and dry their hands:
 - at the beginning and end of each work day and before and after eating, drinking, smoking and toileting;
 - before and after the provision of first aid;
 - before and after the provision of toileting assistance;
 - after any contact with blood or other body substances; and
 - immediately after removing gloves.

Hands should be washed using running water, soap and paper towels or hot air drying machines. Hands can be protected from chafing by the regular use of moisturising creams.

- Staff should maintain a high standard of personal hygiene, for example, if hands or other skin surfaces become contaminated with blood or other body substances they must be washed immediately, or as soon as practicable.

Cuts and abrasions

- Staff should check for cuts or abrasions on exposed parts of the body. These should be covered with waterproof dressings. Staff providing first aid should wear gloves at all times as cuts and abrasions are not always visible to the eye.

Use of single use (disposable) gloves

- Gloves are worn as a barrier to protect wearer's hands from contamination or to prevent the transfer of micro-organisms already on the hands.
- Staff should wear single use gloves whenever there is a likelihood of contact with blood or body substances and when handling and cleaning first aid equipment. Disposable gloves should always be used when toileting students.

- Single use gloves must be changed and discarded:
 - as soon as they are torn or punctured; and
 - after contact with one individual is complete and before care is provided to another.
- Hands should be washed after removal and disposal of gloves.
- For cleaning of equipment, such as first aid equipment, general-purpose household gloves are appropriate. These can be washed and reused but should be discarded when they become peeled, cracked, discoloured, torn or punctured.

Provision of first aid

- Staff members providing first aid should wear disposable gloves. Staff should encourage and guide students to assist with their own first aid for minor scratches or cuts, where feasible. Any equipment or materials labelled as 'single use only' must not be reused, but disposed of after use. Equipment or materials that are labelled as reusable should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected or sterilised as per manufacturer's instructions.

First aid procedures which require equipment (which includes needles, tweezers and scissors) to enter the body should not be carried out by staff and students. Medical attention should be arranged as soon as possible.

Disposal and cleaning of soiled equipment/materials

- All equipment or materials soiled with blood or other body substances should be either disposed of or cleaned appropriately. Gloves must be worn when handling and cleaning soiled equipment. The cleaning, disinfection or sterilisation process required for an item depends on its intended use. All reusable items must be cleaned first in cold water and detergent.
- Any equipment or materials labelled as single use only must not be reused, but disposed of after use. Equipment that is labelled as reusable must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected or sterilised in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- The process of cleaning must involve water and physical or mechanical action and a detergent. All cleaning agents must be removed from instruments and equipment by rinsing prior to further processing.
- Please refer to Section 9 of the NSW Health *Infection Control Policy*, which can be accessed on the NSW Health website at www.health.nsw.gov.au.

Attending to spills of blood and other body substances

- Spills of blood or other body substances on the ground, floors, furniture or equipment should be attended to immediately. When cleaning a spill:

- disposable gloves should be worn;
- the site should be *thoroughly* cleaned with detergent and water; and
- hands should be washed after removal and disposal of gloves.

Contaminated clothing

- Clothing contaminated with blood or body substances should be removed and stored in leak proof plastic bags until it can be washed. A normal hot machine wash with detergent is appropriate.

Sharps

- Discarded needles and syringes should be disposed of according to the DET *Procedures for the Safe Handling and Disposal of Sharps* issued in June 2001 and the information regarding disposal of sharps containers outlined below.
- Schools, colleges and campuses should contact the NSW Health Needle Clean Up Hotline (1800 633 353) regarding disposal of sharps containers holding **only** needles and syringes that have been discarded in Department of Education and Training grounds and buildings.
- The hotline is **not** to be used for disposing of general sharps containers used for sharps generated by staff or students who self inject, or other sharps generated by the school or college in the normal course of operations. These may include:
 - sharps used in science laboratories and experiments including needles, razor blades, scalpels and broken pasteur pipettes;
 - items used to assist in the toileting of students with an intellectual or other disability e.g catheters; and
 - any other sharp. NSW Health defines a sharp as “any object capable of inflicting a penetrating injury, which may or may not be contaminated with blood or body substances. This includes needles and any other sharp or objects or instruments designed to perform penetrating procedures”.
- Sharps should be segregated from general waste disposal. This is important to ensure that waste disposal personnel are not exposed to the risk of injury during the processing of waste.
- Where schools and colleges need to dispose of general sharps containers, they should liaise with their current waste disposal contractor or local council to make appropriate arrangements.
- Staff involved in supervising students who self-inject and staff who administer injections must take precautions to avoid needle stick injury.

Use of whistles

- Staff should not share whistles. Principals and managers should ensure that there are sufficient whistles provided for individual staff members.

Use of cups and eating utensils

- Staff should not share cups or eating utensils unless washed with water and detergent between use.

Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation

- Where possible, resuscitation face masks should be used for cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. Face masks should only be used by staff who are trained in their use. Fully disposable masks are not to be reused. Reusable masks are to be disinfected between use. If the mask has a disposable one way valve, the valve is only to be used once and then replaced.
- First aid kits in all work locations including Departmental vehicles are to include a resuscitation face mask. Staff responsible for first aid should carry a face mask with them while on duty. A face mask and disposable gloves are to be available on all excursions involving water activities or where an overnight stay is involved.
- When using manikins in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation training, the cleaning procedure recommended by the manikin manufacturers must be known, understood and carefully followed. Individual face or mouth-nose pieces must be disinfected before use by another person. Single use items must not be re-used. Alcoholic chlorhexidine (70 per cent solution) is usually recommended for cleaning the mouthpiece. Staff and students must wash their hands before and after training sessions.

Experiments

- Experiments are not to be performed which involve the use of fresh human tissue or other body substances, for example, cheek cell smears, blood typing, blood smears and urine samples. Commercially prepared slide preparations may be used to study the cellular components of blood.

Exposure to potentially infectious materials

- Exposure in this instance means where blood or other body fluids have entered or potentially entered another person's body or blood stream.
- Staff exposed to materials (blood or other body substances) suspected of being infectious should attend a doctor's surgery or hospital for risk assessment and treatment if required.
- After exposure to blood or other body substances staff should as soon as possible do the following:
- encourage bleeding if the exposure involves a cut or puncture, then wash with

soap or water;

- wash with soap and water where the exposure does not involve a cut or puncture;
- if eyes are contaminated rinse them, while they are open, gently but thoroughly with water or normal saline;
- if blood or other body substances get in the mouth, spit them out and then rinse the mouth with water several times;
- if clothing is contaminated remove clothing and shower if necessary; and
- inform an appropriate person to ensure that necessary further action is undertaken.

IMMUNISATION OF STAFF AGAINST HEPATITIS

The majority of Department of Education and Training staff do not need to be immunised against hepatitis for occupational health and safety reasons. Vaccines are available for hepatitis A and B only.

Reimbursement for the cost of immunisation

Government schools

Staff who are regularly required to provide toileting assistance to students are eligible to be reimbursed for the cost of **hepatitis A** immunisation (e.g. staff working in special schools or special units in regular schools).

Some staff are eligible to be reimbursed for the cost of immunisation for **hepatitis B**. Eligible staff are teachers who are in direct contact with students and some school administrative and support staff who are in direct with students and who:

- work in special schools and special units in regular schools;
- work in schools where there is, or is likely to be, a high prevalence of hepatitis B;
- are directly responsible for one, or a small number of known people with hepatitis B;
- are responsible for first aid and who regularly attend to first aid; or
- regularly attend to sports injuries.

Other staff with a lower level of contact with people who may have hepatitis A or hepatitis B may wish to be immunised at their own expense.

Principals who require further information should contact their local NSW Public Health Unit for further information and assistance (contact numbers at Appendix 1).

TAFE NSW

It is the responsibility of TAFE NSW managers to assess the risk factors applying to staff in their workplace and determine if reimbursement for immunisation is appropriate for staff. Staff who may be at risk of contracting **hepatitis A or B** include:

- staff providing first aid;
- plumbers;
- staff such as biological sciences laboratory staff who handle blood or blood products, saliva, semen or vaginal fluids;
- teachers of hairdressing or beauty therapy who may be at risk of contamination if contaminated instruments penetrate the skin or come in contact with mucous membranes; and
- staff involved in toileting of children or other students (e.g. staff in TAFE NSW Children's Centres).

Managers who require further information should contact their local Public Health Unit for further information and assistance (contact numbers at Appendix 1).

Procedures for immunisation

Government schools

School based staff seeking to be immunised at the Department's expense should approach their principal, who will make a recommendation to their district staff welfare officer.

District office staff

District office staff should approach their district superintendent.

State office staff

Recommendations for state office staff should be made via their director to the Staff Welfare Unit.

Once approved, immunisation is generally organised by the individual, unless a group immunisation is organised.

School, district and state office staff are to be immunised outside of work hours. The Department will reimburse costs not covered by Medicare or health fund rebate. No reimbursement is made for the cost of transport.

TAFE NSW

TAFE staff seeking to be immunised at the Department's expense should approach their manager. Once approved, immunisation is generally organised by the individual,

unless a group immunisation is organised.

TAFE staff are to be immunised outside of work hours. The institute will reimburse costs not covered by Medicare or health fund rebate, from appropriate institute funds. No reimbursement is made for the cost of transport.

RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THIS POLICY

Principals and managers will:

- make staff aware of their low level of risk, particularly where the safe work practices outlined in this policy are followed;
- make staff aware of, and require staff to use standard precautions for handling blood and other body substances;
- make satisfactory arrangements for first aid including arranging for a staff member to undertake the role of first aid officer in the workplace in accordance with the OH&S (First-aid) Regulation 1989;
- ensure the workplace has a first aid kit(s) stocked in accordance with the OH&S (First-aid) Regulation 1989;
- ensure that first aid kits contain face masks and that they are available for designated first aid officers;
- ensure staff hand-washing facilities are equipped with soap, running water and hand-drying facilities;
- ensure that appropriate cleaning solutions, cleaning equipment (eg cloths, brushes) and gloves are available;
- establish procedures for maintaining the confidentiality of staff and students' medical information;
- ensure that processes are in place to prevent discrimination against staff and students known to have hepatitis, HIV or other infectious diseases; and
- recommend for immunisation eligible staff who wish to be immunised.

Staff will:

- maintain a high level of personal hygiene and follow safe work practices outlined in this policy (pages 4-8);
- assess their level of risk of contracting hepatitis at work on the basis of this policy and seek the recommendation of the principal, district superintendent, director or manager (depending on work location) for reimbursement of immunisation costs where appropriate;
- follow procedures for maintaining confidentiality of staff and student medical information; and

- follow processes to prevent discrimination against staff or students known or thought to have hepatitis, HIV or other infectious diseases.

Face masks

Face masks are to be purchased by schools from current school global budget allocations and by district offices, state office directorates and TAFE NSW colleges and campuses from within their current budget allocations. Face masks are available within government contract.

This policy replaces the following policies:

Government schools

- Memorandum to Regional Directors, *Hepatitis B: Immunisation of Staff in Schools*, 10 February 1988;
- Memorandum to Principals, No 89/207 (S.134) *Hepatitis B*, 24 July 1989;
- Memorandum to Principals, No 89/334 (S.223) *Transmission of Hepatitis B Within Schools*, 24 November 1989; and
- Memorandum to Assistant Directors-General (Region), *Hepatitis B: Immunisation of Staff in Special Schools*, 16 October 1990.

TAFE NSW

The policy replaces the following sections of TAFE NSW Infectious Diseases Policy:

- Section 4.4.5 with respect to screening and immunisation for hepatitis; and
- Section 5.6.

This policy complements the following policies:

Government schools

- *Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools* (1999);
- *Occupational Health, Safety and Injury Management: a guide for the principal or manager* (May 2000);
- *General Hygiene and Communicable Diseases Including AIDS*, 1988;
- *Safe Handling and Disposal of Sharps*, published as a policy supplement to the June 2001 Departmental *Occupational Health and Safety Bulletin*; and
- *OH&S (First-aid) Regulation* 1989, *Health, Safety & Welfare Bulletin* No 13,

November 1991.

TAFE NSW

- the TAFE NSW *Infectious Diseases Policy* (1993) (notice of policy published in the *TAFE NSW Gazette* No.38 of 29 September 1993 (as amended by this policy);
- the TAFE NSW *Occupational Health and Safety Policy* (TAFE NSW Gazette No.5 of 10 February 1988);
- the TAFE NSW *First Aid Policy* (TAFE NSW Gazette No. 27 of 14 July 93);
- the TAFE NSW *Children's Centres Operations Manual* 1996; and
- *Occupational Health, Safety and Injury Management: a guide for the principal or manager* (May 2000).

Enquiries

If staff in schools have any enquiries in relation to this policy, they should contact the staff welfare officer in their district office. State office staff should contact the Staff Welfare Unit. TAFE NSW staff should discuss the policy with their manager or contact the OH&S coordinator for their institute.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for contacts for further information in relation to viral hepatitis.

APPENDIX 1

Further information

For further information concerning viral hepatitis, it is recommended that staff:

- access the NSW Health website at www.health.nsw.gov.au and click on the “Common Health Topics” link. There are three facts sheets relating to viral hepatitis currently on the website: “Hepatitis A”, “Hepatitis B” and “Hepatitis C”. Additional information can also be found on the website of the Hepatitis C Council of NSW at www.hepatitisc.org.au.
- contact the following information services, as appropriate

Contact	Service provided	Contact telephone																																				
Hepatitis C Helpline, a service of the Hepatitis C Council of NSW	Free, confidential and non-judgemental telephone information and support service about viral hepatitis	9332 1599 (Sydney callers) 1800 803 990 (other NSW callers)																																				
Public Health Units in NSW	Information about viral hepatitis including hepatitis A, B or C	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Public health units in NSW</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Central Coast, Wyoming</td> <td>4349 4845</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Central Sydney, Camperdown</td> <td>9515 3180</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Far West, Broken Hill</td> <td>(08) 8080 1499</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hunter, Wallsend</td> <td>4924 6477</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Illawarra, Gwynneville</td> <td>4275 4600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Macquarie, Dubbo</td> <td>6841 2249</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mid North Coast, Port Macquarie</td> <td>6588 2750</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mid Western, Bathurst</td> <td>6339 5538</td> </tr> <tr> <td>New England, Tamworth</td> <td>6766 2288</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Northern Rivers, Lismore</td> <td>6620 7500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Northern Sydney, Hornsby</td> <td>9477 9400</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South Eastern Sydney, Zetland</td> <td>9382 8333</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Southern NSW, Goulburn</td> <td>4827 3428</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South West Centre of Public Health, Albury</td> <td>6021 4799</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South Western Sydney, Liverpool</td> <td>9828 5944</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Western Sector, Nth Parramatta</td> <td>9840 3603</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Western Sector, Penrith</td> <td>4734 2022</td> </tr> </table>	Public health units in NSW		Central Coast, Wyoming	4349 4845	Central Sydney, Camperdown	9515 3180	Far West, Broken Hill	(08) 8080 1499	Hunter, Wallsend	4924 6477	Illawarra, Gwynneville	4275 4600	Macquarie, Dubbo	6841 2249	Mid North Coast, Port Macquarie	6588 2750	Mid Western, Bathurst	6339 5538	New England, Tamworth	6766 2288	Northern Rivers, Lismore	6620 7500	Northern Sydney, Hornsby	9477 9400	South Eastern Sydney, Zetland	9382 8333	Southern NSW, Goulburn	4827 3428	South West Centre of Public Health, Albury	6021 4799	South Western Sydney, Liverpool	9828 5944	Western Sector, Nth Parramatta	9840 3603	Western Sector, Penrith	4734 2022
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APPENDIX 2

References

- *Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools* (1999), issued to principals by the Deputy Director-General (Development and Support) in November 1999.
- NSW Health Infection Control Policy
- *Hepatitis C: What you need to know*, Hepatitis C Council of NSW, 2001