



Departmental Safety Guidance – Hepatitis B Advice to Managers

Review/Issue Date	Any Changes Required	By Whom
November 13	Yes	Trevor Thacker
October 16	Change of telephone number	Trevor Thacker

Introduction

The nature of our work means that some staff will at some point in time have to work with people who have or carry infections. Some people may well have infections without knowing they have them. It is important to recognise this fact and be careful to employ universal precautions. Wash and dry hands thoroughly, wear gloves and aprons at all times when providing personal care for every service user. For further information on universal precautions, please see Section 6 of the [Infection Control Policy](#).

Hepatitis B is one of these infections. It affects the liver and in some cases can be life threatening. Prevention of this disease is crucial. In addition to universal precautions, vaccinations are also available which in the majority of cases will protect workers from this disease. It is important to note that they do not work in all individuals and they are no substitute for following universal precautions.

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) which is part of Public Health England and National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) have specified groups of workers who are at increased risk from certain infections including Hepatitis B. They give clear guidelines about who should be offered immunisations and for what. These guidelines recommend that there should be a process of screening, to ensure that any staff who fall into these categories, or are at risk in their roles, have the availability of an immunisation should they wish. Records **must** be kept of the offer of vaccination and subsequent acceptance or refusal. Records must also be kept of the person receiving the vaccinations.

Hepatitis B is reportable to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) where it has been contracted through work.

It is also a disease notifiable under the Public Health Infectious Diseases Regulations 1988 although responsibility for notifying falls with the diagnosing medical practitioner.

The Key Principles are ASSESS: ENSURE: MONITOR

ASSESS

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Risk Assessments should be undertaken to establish which staff may be at increased risk from exposure to the Hepatitis B virus and what control measures as an alternative to immunisation should be considered and implemented.

The general level of risk is low. The majority of staff will have a level of risk which is no more than that which applies to anyone in everyday life.

The focus should be on specific staff groups who are at increased risk.

Factors to consider which will increase the risk are:

- The likelihood of assault where the skin may be broken, either intentionally or not, for example when working with people with emotional and behavioral difficulties.
- People who are at risk of being bitten or scratched although infection via this route is rare.
- Those who work with intravenous drug users or people serving or who have served custodial sentences.
- Those who work with people who in turn work or have worked in the sex industry.
- Those working with people who have severe learning difficulties.

The degree of risks will be different for employees doing different jobs, at different times, and in different circumstances.

Employees for whom the risk assessment is high and who decide to have the vaccinations should be asked to approach their GP in the first instance who in some cases may provide the injections free of charge. If this is not the case, then they should contact the Occupational Health Unit for Chesterfield Hospitals, 01246 515696, who will carry out this service on behalf of the Council. The cost will be charged to the Adult Care Department.

The Occupational Health Unit for Chesterfield Hospitals will provide the advice and guidance on the appropriateness of immunisation taking into account the employee's working environment, level of risk, and personal medical history.

Immunisation involves a course of **three** injections. **Full immunisation is only achieved by having the full course.**

For staff who receive an injury

For those who sustain an injury at work where it is foreseeable that cross infection may have taken place e.g. needle stick, which has drawn blood, post incident counseling can be provided by the Occupational Health Unit for Chesterfield Hospitals 01246 515696. There may be a cost for this service which will be charged to the department.

ENSURE

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- Ensure that any staff who have been identified as being in the higher risk staff groups have been screened at the induction check list stage, to establish if they have previously been vaccinated.
- Ensure that any that have not been vaccinated and have no immunity are offered the injections.
- Ensure that the result of this offer is recorded, either accepted or declined.
- Ensure that any follow up blood tests or booster injections are recorded.
- Ensure that all risk assessments and care plans identify where possible, individuals whose condition may lead to biting or scratching, and put into place control measures to minimize the risk e.g. keeping fingernails short, wearing mittens etc.
- Ensure that all staff have received infection control training.
- Ensure that all staff have attended current Personal Safety Training.
- Reinforce the need for good personal hygiene at all times, washing and drying of hands. And the use of gloves and aprons and any other protective clothing.
- Make staff aware of DSG Prevention of Needle Stick Injuries.
- Ensure that any cases of Hepatitis, where it is thought that staff may have contracted the illness through work, are reported to the Adult Care Health and Safety Section on an accident form. The Health and Safety Section will notify the Health and Safety Executive.

Monitor

- Ensure that all risk assessments are regularly reviewed.
- Ensure that any changes of behaviour of clients reported by staff are included in these reviews.
- Ensure that staff are following universal precautions.
- Ensure that all training is up to date and refresher training provided.

Further information can be obtained from:

- DCC Occupational Health Nurses.
- Adult Care, Health and Safety Officers or by following the link below
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/148308/Green-Book-Chapter-18.pdf