

# Hepatitis C



## What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a viral infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV).

## What Are the Symptoms?

Children usually don't show any signs or symptoms. Adults often suffer from tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, fever and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes) as well as dark brown urine and pale-colored stools.

## Who Gets It and How?

The viruses that cause hepatitis C are spread through blood (exposure to blood and blood products from HCV-infected persons) or other body fluids. It is also spread by infected mothers to newborn infants through blood exposure at birth. Like hepatitis B, the spread of hepatitis C is very rare in the child care setting.

## When Should People with this Illness Be Excluded?

Exclude carriers of hepatitis C virus only if they have uncontrolled biting or oozing skin lesions that cannot be covered.

## Where Should I Report It?

Licensing requires that child care providers report to their local health department and to Licensing if there are two or more known or suspected cases of hepatitis C in a child care program. However, the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommends that child care providers report even if there is only a single case, to ensure that the local Public Health Department is aware that this serious illness is present in a child care setting.

## How Can I Limit the Spread?

- Follow standard precautions and make sure that proper hand washing and diaper changing practices are followed.
- Clean up blood spills immediately. Wear gloves when cleaning up blood spills or providing first aid for bleeding wounds. Wash your hands afterwards.
- Wear gloves when changing a diaper soiled with bloody stools. Wash your hands afterwards. If you have open sores or rash, cuts or other abrasions on the hands, wear gloves for changing diapers.
- Disinfect diaper-changing areas and surfaces on which blood has been spilled. Use freshly-prepared bleach solution.
- Do not allow sharing of personal items which may become contaminated with infectious blood or bodily fluids, such as toothbrushes, food or any object that may be mouthed.
- Place disposable items contaminated with blood or bodily fluids in sealed plastic bags in covered trash containers. Put other items contaminated with blood or body fluid in sealed plastic bags.
- Discourage aggressive behavior such as biting and scratching.