HEPATITIS B

It is rare for children to be infected with Hepatitis B. An exception may be those children infected during childbirth from a mother who has had the virus present in her blood. This may result in the child becoming a chronic carrier. Children who are chronic carriers of the virus may be present in childcare settings; however, spread of Hepatitis B in childcare settings is very rare.

CAUSE:
Hepatitis B virus.

SYMPTOMS: Loss of appetite, tiredness, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, dark (tea or cola-colored) urine, light colored stools, and sometimes rash or joint pain. Jaundice (yellowing of eyes or skin) may be present in adults but it is uncommon in young children. Symptoms vary greatly from none at all to severe illness. Adults have symptoms more often than children do.

SPREAD:
Virus is present in the blood and other body fluids that may contain blood. It can be spread person-to-person when blood from an infected person enters open cuts of another person or through sexual contact. Although virus can be found in saliva, the amount of virus in the saliva is so low that spread is very unlikely.

INCUBATION: It takes from 6 weeks to 6 months, usually about 3 months, from the time a person is exposed to Hepatitis B until disease occurs.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD:
May be infectious for many weeks before onset of symptoms and remain infectious for 4 to 6 months. Some people are chronic carriers of the virus and may be infectious for life.

EXCLUSION:
A child who has the Hepatitis B virus in his/her blood may attend childcare unless he/she has unusually aggressive behavior (e.g. biting), oozing sores that cannot be covered, or bleeding problems. Hepatitis B carriers with these conditions should be assessed by a team of medical experts on a case by case basis to determine whether they may attend childcare/school.

REPORTABLE:
This disease is reportable to the local or state health department.

Parents/guardians may inform the childcare provider when their child has this illness.

PREVENTION/CONTROL:

1. All infants should receive Hepatitis B vaccine as part of their routine immunization schedule. This would include 3 doses of Hepatitis B vaccine during the first 18 months of life.
2. Cleaning and disinfecting of blood and body fluid spills:
    a. Surfaces and objects contaminated with blood or body fluids must be cleaned with soap or detergent and water and then disinfected immediately. Hepatitis B virus, as well as other infectious germs, may be found in blood and bloody body fluids of any person even when there are no symptoms to suggest infection is present.
    b. Wear disposable gloves when handling blood (nosebleeds, cuts) or items, surfaces or clothing soiled by blood or bloody body fluids, or when there are open sores, cuts or abrasions on the hands.
    c. Wash hands immediately after contact with any body fluids, even if gloves have been worn. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water.
    d. **Disinfecting solutions:**
        i. To disinfect clean, non-food contact surfaces make a solution of household bleach and water. Add ¼ cup bleach to 1 gallon of water or to make a smaller amount in a spray bottle 1-tablespoon bleach to 1 quart of water. Saturate area with solution. DO NOT rinse. Air dry.
        ii. To disinfect mouthed toys or eating utensils: boil, use a dishwasher, or soak clean items for 2 minutes in a weak bleach solution. Add 1-tablespoon bleach to 1 gallon of water or ¾ teaspoon to 1 quart of water. DO NOT rinse. Air dry. This solution can also be used to disinfect clean kitchen surfaces.
        iii. **PREPARE BLEACH SOLUTION FRESH DAILY** because it loses its ability to kill germs with time.
3. Children should not share toothbrushes.
4. Diagnosis - Hepatitis B can be diagnosed through blood tests.
5. Treatment: Discuss supportive therapy with your healthcare provider. Persons exposed to blood or bloody body fluids from an infected person should contact their healthcare provider or the local or state health department immediately regarding the possible need for Hepatitis B immune globulin and vaccine.