

**SCHOOL EMPLOYEES INFORMATION
ON
HIV/AIDS AND HEPATITIS B**

WHAT IS HIV/AIDS?

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is the advanced stage of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection. HIV attacks the body's immune system, leaving it vulnerable to life-threatening opportunistic infections and cancers. The virus also may directly attack the central nervous system and cause deterioration of the brain. Persons infected with HIV frequently have no apparent symptoms. They may look healthy. *There is no known cure for AIDS. More than half of the persons in the United States with AIDS have died.*

HOW IS HIV INFECTION SPREAD?

Everyone infected with HIV, even a person without apparent symptoms, can transmit the virus to someone else. HIV infection can be transmitted by:

- Sexual activity involving direct contact with semen, blood or vaginal secretion of someone who is infected,
- Sharing unsterilized instruments for tattooing, ear piercing, shaving, or acupuncture,
- Sharing intravenous (IV) needles and/or syringes with someone who is infected,
- Direct contact with infected blood on broken skin,
- Accidental needle sticks with needles containing infected blood,
- Receiving blood transfusions or blood products from someone who is infected (a screening test has been used since 1985 that has reduced this risk to 1 in 68,000 in California [AIDS Update, December 1988]), or

- Being born to or breastfed by an infected mother.

The HIV/AIDS virus cannot be transmitted or spread:

- Through air or water
- By coughing or sneezing
- On surfaces such as phones, doorknobs, office equipment, tools, etc.
- By using drinking fountains, toilets, sinks, etc.
- Through kissing or biting. (There is no documentation of transmission through these modes.)

SYMPTOMS

A person could be infected with HIV and not even know because it might take years to damage the immune system enough for symptoms to appear. They may not know for many years that they have the infection. When symptoms do appear, they often seem like many common illnesses such as:

- Fever
- Swollen glands
- Loss of appetite
- Night sweats
- Diarrhea

Only a physician or a blood test will identify the presence of HIV. As the HIV infected person becomes unable to fight off infections and certain illnesses, they are diagnosed with AIDS. There is no cure for HIV or AIDS.

WHAT IS HEPATITIS B?

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by a virus present in blood and other body fluids of infected persons. Less than 50 percent of persons who become infected show symptoms of illness. The symptoms are like those of hepatitis A and include fatigue, mild fever, muscle or joint aches,

nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and abdominal pain. In some patients the urine turns dark and the skin becomes yellow. The onset of symptoms may appear from 6 weeks to 6 months after becoming infected with the virus. Death is uncommon in hepatitis B, but 5 to 10 percent of those infected become long-term virus carriers. Up to 25 percent of carriers may develop serious chronic liver disease. *There is a highly effective vaccine to prevent infection with hepatitis B.*

HOW IS HEPATITIS B SPREAD?

An infected person can transmit hepatitis B as long as the virus remains in the blood. Transmission may occur as early as 4 weeks before any symptoms occur. A small number of people will carry the virus in their blood for years and are known as chronic carriers. Hepatitis B is transmitted by:

- Sexual activity involving direct contact with semen, blood, or vaginal secretions of someone who is infected,
- Sharing unsterile instruments used to penetrate the skin such as those used for tattooing, ear piercing, shaving or acupuncture with someone who is infected,
- Direct contact of infected blood with mucous membrane of the eye and mouth,
- Direct contact with infected blood on broken skin (e.g., cuts),
- Accidental needle sticks with needles containing infected blood,
- Sharing toothbrushes contaminated with infected blood, or
- Being born to an infected mother.

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of hepatitis B include:

- Mild fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain
- Nausea
- Muscle aches
- Joint aches

- Skin becomes yellowish (jaundice)
- Vomiting
- Urine turns dark

WHAT ARE UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS?

Universal precautions are precautions used in all situations and not limited to use with individuals known to be carrying a specific virus such as HIV or the virus causing hepatitis B. In the school setting those precautions should include: hand washing, using gloves, careful trash disposal, using disinfectants, and modification of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

HANDWASHING: Hand washing facilities should include soap and warm running water. Automatic hand dryers or paper towels can be used for drying. Classroom instruction about proper hand washing can be integrated into health instruction at all grade levels. Students should be instructed to wash their hands for 10 seconds. Scheduling time for students to wash hands before eating is suggested to encourage this practice.

USING GLOVES: All staff members who may be required to administer first aid involving blood or to handle body fluids that may contain blood should have access to latex gloves in the areas where the gloves might be required to be used. Gloves should be used only once and then disposed properly.

TRASH DISPOSAL: Special containers lined with plastic and marked appropriately are recommended for disposal of trash containing blood or any body spills that may contain blood. These wastes should be double bagged. If needles, syringes, or lancets are used in the school setting, arrange for a puncture-proof container. Contact your local health department for directions about disposal of contaminated materials. Place intact needles and syringes in the designated container. Do not bend or break needles. Do not recap needles.

FIRST AID INVOLVING BLOOD AND CPR: Individuals with responsibility for administering first aid in school, on the athletic fields, in the cafeterias,

on the playgrounds, or on school buses should have current CPR instruction and certification. That instruction can be provided by certificated school nurses employed by the school districts or by local agencies such as the American Red Cross and the American Heart Association. Gloves should be standard components of first aid supplies in the schools so that they are readily accessible for emergencies and regular care given in school health offices, cafeterias and athletic training rooms. Devices that prevent backflow of fluids from the mouth of a victim being given CPR also should be readily accessible to those persons most likely to be the rescuers in the school setting. Many types of devices are available. Contact your local paramedic teams or hospital emergency room to determine which devices they recommend.

POLICIES AND LAWS

The law states that the information regarding HIV/AIDS status requires written permission. The information may only be shared with persons specifically named.

- While adults grant their own written permission to share their HIV/AIDS status, parents or guardians of children can grant written permission to share information on students under 18.
- Sharing information regarding HIV/AIDS infected persons without consent is prohibited by law, and that person is subject to a civil penalty and a fine not to exceed \$5,000.00.
- The policies for students with HIV/AIDS state that students must not be excluded or placed specially or solely because of their HIV status.
- Only a student's physician may determine if school attendance is inappropriate due to the student's vulnerability to infections present at school.
- The current law does not require parents or physicians to inform school officials of the student's HIV/AIDS status. If disclosure by student or parent is made, it must be kept

confidential unless written permission is given.

- In the legalities of testing, it is a misdemeanor to disclose blood test results of HIV/AIDS positives except by written authorization (CH&S Code Chapter 1.11 & 1.12 sections 199.21, 199.30, 199.31 & 199.37).
- Pupils in grades 7-12 must receive AIDS prevention instruction at least once in junior high or middle school and once in high school (CEC 5120.5).
- Districts are required to provide inservice training for those employees who provide AIDS prevention instruction (CEC 51229.8).

Information adapted from Alameda County Office of Education flier Healthy Kids Healthy California, Well Into the Future