

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Background:

The Division expects responsible and compassionate treatment of students and employees with a communicable disease and supports information and prevention programs for communicable disease prevention. The health and safety of staff, students and visitors is a top priority. Everyone is encouraged to follow good hygiene habits to prevent the spread of disease. This includes:

- Stay home if you are feeling sick.
- Wash or sanitize your hands often.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Clean and disinfect high- touch surfaces regularly.
- Wear a mask if you get sick or develop symptoms while at school or work.

Definitions:

Blood-Borne Disease:

is a disease transmitted by blood or body fluids—such as HIV and Hepatitis B.

Communicable Disease:

is a disease that is transmitted through direct or indirect contact with an infected person, animal or the environment. Also known as a contagious disease.

Illness Outbreak:

may be declared by Alberta Health Services when greater than 10 per cent of students and staff are absent because of illness—for example, influenza—or there is a significant increase in the number of staff or students becoming ill because of a specific communicable disease or condition—for example, chickenpox and mumps.

Notifiable Disease:

is a disease controlled or monitored under the Communicable Disease Regulation, *Public Health Act* and must be reported to Public Health Officials.

Pandemic:

is an infectious disease that is spreading through human populations across a wide geographic region.

Respiratory Etiquette:

means to cover your cough and sneeze. Turn your head away from others and cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.

Universal Precautions:

a standard set of procedures designed to prevent transmission of blood-borne diseases such as hepatitis B virus, including use of personal protective equipment. Universal precautions assume all blood and body fluids are considered potentially infectious.

Procedures:

1. Students or employees with communicable diseases shall be allowed to continue normal classes or employment duties unless:
 - 1.1. If, in the opinion of the Medical Officer of Health, there are special circumstances or regulations that necessitate restriction—for example, pandemics.
 - 1.2. It is a bona fide occupational requirement of a job of the employee that the employee be free from any communicable disease.
2. Students and employees with communicable diseases shall be managed in accordance with the *Public Health Act* and *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations and the advice of Alberta Health Services.
3. In each case, the risks, and benefits to both the infected student or employee and others in the learning and working environment shall be considered.
4. The privacy of an individual must be respected, and any records of communicable diseases of students and employees kept shall be strictly confidential.
5. The number of people who are aware of the individual's condition shall be kept at the minimum needed to assure proper care and to prevent situations where the potential for transmission may occur.
6. Decisions regarding the type of care and educational setting for students infected with a communicable disease shall be based on the behaviour, neurological development and physical condition of the child and the expected type of interaction with others in the setting. Decisions shall be made using a team approach, which includes the child's health care provider, parent/guardian, the Principal and staff immediately associated with the care and education of the child.
7. Procedures for dealing with employees who may be exposed to or become infected with a communicable disease will be consistent with public health and occupational health and safety requirements and best practices.
8. If, in the opinion of the attending physician, an infected employee is no longer capable of working, the matter will be dealt with in the same way as other illnesses that impair an employee's capacity to work.
9. Principals and directors shall ensure all employees and students receive age-appropriate information about the prevention and control of communicable diseases that include proper hand washing and respiratory etiquette.
10. Students and employees with diseases that can be transmissible in school and athletic settings—such as, but not limited to, chickenpox, influenza and pink eye—shall be managed in accordance with Alberta Health Services guidelines. Head lice and bed bugs are not considered communicable diseases but shall be managed according to Division and public health protocols.
11. Employees shall treat all blood and body fluids as potentially infectious.

12. All employees shall follow universal precautions outlined in the [prevention of blood-borne diseases](#) when handling blood and body fluids to prevent exposure to blood-borne diseases.
13. Principals and directors shall provide the necessary training, equipment and supplies to implement universal precautions. This includes access to body fluid spill supplies, sharps containers for contaminated needles and personal protective equipment, including gloves, goggles and respiratory protection.
14. Staff who have frequent contact with blood or work with higher-risk populations such as children with biting behaviours or known carriers of a blood-borne disease shall be eligible to receive the hepatitis B vaccine paid for by the Division.
15. All potential blood exposures including bites and needle sticks shall be promptly reported on the [Student Incident and Injury Report](#) (Form 160-4) or [Occupational Incident and Injury Report](#) (Form 160-5), as applicable. Employees shall seek same-day medical attention for all potential blood exposures—for example, bites that break the skin.
16. Diseases that may have an impact on pregnant employees—such as fifth disease—or persons with compromised immune systems shall be promptly reported to the Occupational Health and Safety Specialist, Human Resources.
17. Letters or information on communicable diseases for employees and parents/guardians will be distributed only as necessary in consultation with the Principal, the Occupational Health and Safety Specialist and Alberta Health Services.
18. Principals shall notify Alberta Health Services when student absenteeism due to illness exceeds 10 per cent. If an illness outbreak is declared, principals shall notify Occupational Health and Safety and follow the [guidelines for school illness outbreaks](#).
19. Occupational Health and Safety will initiate the Division illness outbreak protocol.

Reference:

Section 3, 11, 33, 52, 53, 196, 197, 222 *Education Act*
Emergency Medical Aid Act
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
Health Information Act
Occupational Health and Safety Act
Public Health Act
Communicable Disease Regulation (AR 238/85)
Ministerial Directive 4.1.1 – HIV / AIDS in Educational Settings
[EIPS Infection Control Resources](#)