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Dear Parent / Carer

**Re: Hepatitis A**

I am writing to inform you that there are two students in school who have been diagnosed with hepatitis A infection.

We take the health and wellbeing of our students and staff very seriously, and as such, we are working closely with health experts at Public Health England (PHE) in the West Midlands to advise us on the best course of action.

PHE is investigating and once this is complete, vaccination of some students and staff members may be recommended as a precaution to reduce risk of further infection. We will be in touch if your child is to be offered vaccination, so that permission can be obtained.

Symptoms

Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver which can be commonly transmitted through person to person spread or through contaminated foods or water. Symptoms can include:

- jaundice (yellowish tinge to the whites of the eyes)
- fever
- tiredness
- loss of appetite
- nausea and vomiting
- abdominal discomfort
- dark urine

Children with hepatitis A sometimes have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all but can pass the infection to others. If your child, or a member of your family develops symptoms of Hepatitis A as described above, please contact your GP (out of hours, contact NHS 111) for advice and further investigation.

# Information Sheets

## HEPATITIS A

### **What is hepatitis A?**

Hepatitis A is a disease caused by the hepatitis A virus which affects the liver. Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver and viruses are a common cause.

### **How is hepatitis A spread?**

The hepatitis A virus is caught by eating or drinking food or water which is contaminated with the virus. The infection can also be spread by close contact with an infected person. The virus is spread by poor personal or public hygiene. It can be caught where standards of hygiene are low in this country and abroad.

### **How do I know if I or someone else has it?**

The illness usually begins with a sudden onset of fever (temperature), feeling unwell, loss of appetite, tiredness, nausea and stomach pain which may be followed within a few days by jaundice – a yellow discolouration of the whites of the eyes and often the skin. Severity of symptoms increases with age. Young children may have mild infections without jaundice or other symptoms and many may have no symptoms at all (asymptomatic).

### **Is hepatitis A infectious?**

Yes, the infection is most commonly spread from person to person by infected faeces (stools) and poor hygiene. Transmission within households is very common. The faeces from infected people are infectious for two weeks before the person becomes ill and for about a week after the jaundice appears. Children without symptoms may be infectious for several weeks longer. People travelling abroad to countries where sanitation is poor are at risk of becoming infected. It is always advisable to seek travel health advice from your GP before undertaking any foreign travel. A vaccine against hepatitis A is available and can be obtained from a GP/travel health clinic before travelling to countries where hepatitis A is common.

### **How do you get hepatitis A?**

You can be infected with the hepatitis A virus by:

- eating food prepared by someone with the infection who hasn't washed their hands properly or washed them in water contaminated with sewage
- drinking contaminated water (including ice cubes)
- eating raw or undercooked shellfish from contaminated water
- close contact with someone who has hepatitis A