



Acute Hepatitis E

Definition:

Hepatitis E is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis E virus (HEV).

Signs and symptoms:

The symptoms of hepatitis E include fever, fatigue, lack of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, dark urine, diarrhea and vomiting. Jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes) may appear. The disease is rarely fatal and most people recover without any complications after several weeks. Some people are asymptomatic.

Transmission:

Hepatitis E virus spreads from person to person by swallowing something that is contaminated with feces from a person who is infected with hepatitis E. Rarely, contaminated food, water and raw or undercooked shellfish can also spread the virus. Most infections result from contact with contaminated water in a developing country. Casual contact, as in the office or at school, do not usually spread the virus.

Diagnosis:

Hepatitis E is diagnosed by a combination of lab tests and clinical signs and symptoms.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Encourage hand washing particularly after using the bathroom and before handling food or drinks to prevent the spread of disease.
- There is no vaccine for hepatitis E licensed in the United States.

Treatment Recommendations

- If acute infection is suspected, the student should be referred immediately to their primary care provider or local emergency department for further evaluation.

Exclusions

Cases in schools should be excluded until diarrhea is resolved.

Reporting Requirements

Acute hepatitis E is a reportable condition and should be reported immediately upon recognition or strong suspicion to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821.

Resources:

- Federal CDC Hepatitis website: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/>
- Hepatitis E Fact Sheet