

# HUMAN BITING INCIDENTS

Biting can be a common occurrence in the childcare and school setting. The risk of getting hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), or Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) from a bite is extremely low for either the child who did the biting or the child or staff member who was bitten. It is very difficult to spread these viruses by biting. In addition, most infants are now being vaccinated against the hepatitis B virus and the number of preschool children (3 to 5 years) with chronic hepatitis B infection is expected to be low. However, biting may cause an infection at the bite site.

Written policies and procedures should be in place before biting incidents occur in order to ensure proper communication with parents/guardians and staff.

## **For childcare and school staff: What to do if a biting incident occurs in a childcare or school setting:**

1. Determine if the bite broke the skin (produced an open wound or puncture wound) and/or caused bleeding.
2. Wear gloves when providing immediate first aid to the bite wound. The wound should be carefully cleaned with soap and water.
3. Inform parents/guardians of both children of the biting incident when two children are involved in the incident. This should be done as soon as possible.
4. If the bite broke the skin, it is recommended that the family or staff consult with a health care provider as soon as possible for any further instructions.
5. **Do not share the names or any information about the children involved in the biting incident.** Release of any information may be a breach of confidentiality or data privacy.
6. Document the incident in writing as established by your facility's policy.

## **Reasons to call a health care provider:**

- To determine if blood tests and/or treatment are needed. It is unlikely that the bite will be a source of infection for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, or HIV, but each situation must be looked at on a case-by-case basis.
- If the bitten person is not up-to-date for tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis and hepatitis B vaccinations, he/she should receive these vaccines as soon as possible.
- If the bitten person has any of the following signs of infection:
  - Increased swelling, redness, warmth, or tenderness at the site.
  - Pus at the site.
  - Fever of 100°F or higher.

If any of these symptoms occur or if the bitten person begins to act sick or the wound does not heal, call a health care provider immediately.

## **Prevention and Control**

- Parents/guardians and childcare and school staff should develop a behavior modification plan to prevent further incidents.
- A child who is infected with HIV, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C virus and continues to bite should be assessed by a team of medical experts to determine an appropriate response plan to prevent the risk of spread of these viruses.

Call your childcare health consultant or your local or state health department for additional assistance with these incidents. For questions about possible exposures, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.

Prepared by Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department (HSPHD)

September 2015

