



Department of Health

Incorporating: Health, Mental Health and Senior Victorians

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OUR REF: ADD/09/42143

YOUR REF:

Dear Colleague

RE: CHANGED REQUIREMENTS REGARDING NOTIFIABLE CONDITIONS – EFFECTIVE FROM 1 JANUARY 2010

On 1 January 2010, the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (PHWA) and the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 (the Regulations) will come into effect replacing the *Health Act 1958* and the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001.

Under the PHWA and the new Regulations, there are changes to the requirements with regard to notifiable conditions and the information and forms to be used for making notifications. These changes are outlined below.

New notifiable conditions

From 1 January 2010, under Schedule 4 of the Regulations, registered medical practitioners and pathology services in Victoria will be required to notify the Department of Health of two new conditions. These are:

- Chikungunya virus infection; and
- Blood lead greater than 10 µg/dL.

Chikungunya virus infection

Chikungunya virus infection has been newly specified as distinct from other arboviral infections. It is included as a Group A notifiable condition and therefore requires notification immediately upon initial diagnosis, whether presumptive or confirmed. Notification should be made by telephone to the Department of Health, followed by written notification within five days of diagnosis.

Blood lead greater than 10 µg/dL

The requirement to notify blood lead greater than 10 µg/dL has been included to enable ongoing monitoring of non-occupational elevated blood lead levels in Victoria and to assist the prevention of further lead exposures. It is a Group B notifiable condition and therefore requires notification to the Department of Health in writing within five days of diagnosis.

For further information about notification and investigation of elevated blood lead, please refer to the enclosed Bulletin.

Conditions no longer required to be notified

Giardiasis has been removed from the list of notifiable conditions under the new regulations. As such, from 1 January 2010, you will no longer need to notify the Department of Health about this condition.

Change to the notifiable conditions regarding Hepatitis A

Under Schedule 4 of the new regulations, Hepatitis A has moved from a Group B to a Group A notifiable condition. This means that from 1 January 2010, you will be required to notify the Department of Health immediately by telephone upon an initial diagnosis of Hepatitis A, followed up by written notification to the Department within five days.

New notifiable conditions form

The Department of Health has revised the 'Notifiable Conditions Form' incorporating each of the changes outlined above. The revised forms should be used to notify all conditions prescribed in the Regulations from 1 January 2010. New pads incorporating the forms are currently being printed and will be forwarded to medical practitioners at the end of January 2010. However, from 1 January 2010, the forms will be available to be downloaded from the Department's website at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas>.

Notifications can also be made securely online using our secure eForm. This can be done at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/notifying/howto>.

For further information in regards to notifiable conditions please contact either the Department's Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit on 1300 651 160, Environmental Health Unit on 1300 761 874, or visit <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas> or <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment>.

Yours sincerely



Dr John Carnie
Director, Health Protection
Chief Health Officer

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Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

News Bulletin – Information for medical practitioners regarding the notification of blood lead greater than 10 µg/dL

From 1 January 2010, registered medical practitioners and pathology services in Victoria will be required to notify the Department of Health when a person's blood lead level is greater than 10 µg/dL. This condition is included as a Group B notifiable condition in Schedule 4 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009. As such, it requires notification to the Department of Health in writing within five days of diagnosis.

Blood lead greater than 10 µg/dL has been included as a notifiable condition to enable ongoing monitoring of non-occupational elevated blood lead levels in Victoria and to assist in the prevention of further lead exposures.

The condition must be notified to the Department of Health, regardless of whether the source of exposure is occupational or non-occupational. As occupational lead exposure is already regulated by WorkSafe under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007, the Department of Health will refer notifications involving occupational lead exposures to WorkSafe for further action.

For notifications associated with non-occupational lead exposures, either a local government Environmental Health Officer (EHO) or an officer from the department may seek your consent to contact the patient in order to administer an exposure evaluation questionnaire. The purpose of the evaluation will be to identify the potential source of lead exposure. An environmental investigation may then be conducted in order to locate the exposure source and allow for its removal.

If it is unclear from the notification information whether the source of lead exposure is occupational or non-occupational, an officer from the department may contact you for clarification.

The NHMRC recently released two statements relating to blood lead: the first is a public statement and the second is an information paper for health care practitioners and policy makers. The public statement provides a summary of:

- general health effects of exposure to lead
- effects on children and pregnant women
- practical things individuals can do to reduce exposure to lead
- links to practical advice for minimising lead exposure.

The information paper provides background information about lead exposure and articulates goals and recommendations for Australia. Both documents can be found at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/gp3syn.htm>

For further information about the notification of high blood lead levels, please contact the Department of Health's Environmental Health Unit on 1300 761 874, or visit <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/home>.