

MEMO

TO: Physicians and Nurse Practitioners

FROM: Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, Chief Medical Officer of Health

DATE: May 9, 2022

RE: **Information on Severe Acute Hepatitis of Unknown Origin in Children**

On April 10, 2022, the Public Health Agency of Canada was notified of cases of severe acute hepatitis of unknown origin in children in the United Kingdom.

Over 200 cases have been diagnosed in several countries since October 2021. These cases are negative for hepatitis viruses A-E and have significantly elevated transaminase (AST or ALT) levels of 500U/L or more.

Children are presenting with jaundice, diarrhea and vomiting, pale stool, nausea, lethargy, and less commonly, fever. Most have been under the age of 12.

Information on the cause of the acute hepatitis cases is evolving with an infectious cause considered most likely by health authorities in the US and UK. Adenovirus and SARS-CoV-2 have been detected in cases; however, their role is not yet clear. No other epidemiological risk factors have been identified to date.

As this appears to be a novel condition and is a potential risk to the health of the population, it is reportable pursuant to subsection 7(1) of the Public Health Protection and Promotion Regulations made under the Public Health and Protection and Promotion Act:

Where he or she reasonably believes that a new or unusual disease, infection, condition or cluster of diseases, infections or conditions that is not otherwise reportable under these regulations could be a risk to the health of the population, a health care professional or an environmental health officer shall report the disease, infection, condition or cluster of diseases, infections or conditions, in accordance with section 23 of the Act, via telephone as soon as the disease, infection or condition is suspected.

Please report cases to the Medical Officer of Health for your region at 1-866-270-7437.

Case definition:

- **Probable:** A person presenting with an acute hepatitis (non hep A-E¹) with serum transaminase >500 IU/L (AST or ALT), who is 16 years and younger, since 1 October 2021.
- **Epidemiologically-linked:** A person presenting with an acute hepatitis (non hep A-E¹) of any age who is a close contact² of a probable case, since 1 October 2021.

¹If hepatitis D-E serology results are pending, but other criteria met, these can be reported and will be classified as “pending classification”. Cases with other explanations for their clinical presentation are excluded.

²Close contacts are defined as having cared for, lived with, spent significant time within close quarters (e.g. co-worker, daycare) or had direct contact with respiratory secretions and other body fluids (e.g., feces) in the 5 months prior to case onset.

Clinical management

If you have identified a child who is a probable or epi-linked case of severe acute hepatitis of unknown origin, please consult with the local paediatrician on call or paediatrician on call at the Janeway Children’s Hospital for guidance on next steps and coordinated testing.