Notifiable conditions in Victoria

Information for medical practitioners and pathology services

Your requirement to notify

Infectious diseases and other conditions of public health concern still occur frequently throughout the world, so constant vigilance is required to minimise their spread. Notification is a vital step in efforts to prevent or control the spread of infection and to prevent further harmful exposures. Health authorities depend on both medical practitioners and pathology services for information on the incidence of these conditions. Notifiable conditions are specified in Schedule 4 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 and are divided into four groups on the basis of the timing, method of notification and the information required.

When to notify

A medical practitioner who reasonably believes that a patient has or may have a notifiable condition or has or may have died with a notifiable condition must notify as follows:

**Group A** conditions require immediate notification to the Department of Health & Human Services (the department) by telephone on 1300 651160 (24 hours) upon initial diagnosis or clinical suspicion (presumptive or confirmed), followed by written notification within five days.

**Group B** conditions require written notification to the department upon initial diagnosis within five days.

**Group C** conditions are the sexually transmissible infections and require written notification to the department upon initial diagnosis within five days. To preclude identification of the patient, only the first two letters of the family and given name of the patient are required.

**Group D** conditions are HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) and written notification is required within five days of initial diagnosis using a separate form which is forwarded to the diagnosing medical practitioner with the laboratory confirmation of HIV infection and is available at www.health.vic.gov.au/notify.

The department provides preprinted Reply Paid envelopes (no stamps required) and STD toll free telephone and facsimile numbers to facilitate notifying. Copies of the forms, information on conditions, diseases and outbreaks, media releases, disease surveillance data, privacy information and other publications are available from the department’s website www.health.vic.gov.au. You can also notify online at www.health.vic.gov.au/notify.

Recent changes

From 4 April 2016 pathology services and medical practitioners are required to notify the department of:

- all blood lead level test results greater than 5 micrograms per decilitre (replacing the current threshold of 10 micrograms per decilitre). This is a Group B notifiable condition, so requires notification to the department in writing within five days of diagnosis.

- all presumptive and confirmed cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). This is a Group A notifiable condition, so requires immediate notification by telephone upon initial diagnosis or clinical suspicion, followed by written notification within 5 days.

In addition to the above changes, **sex** is now captured according to the new national standard produced by the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The categories for **sex** are used to define the set of biological attributes that as person has (i.e. male, female, other). The categories for **gender** are the set of factors that make up a person’s chosen identity within society. Further information is available at www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1200.0.55.012main+features12016.

Privacy legislation

Commonwealth and State privacy legislation does not negate the responsibility to notify the specified conditions nor to provide the information requested on these forms. Doctors have a responsibility to inform their patients that their information is being provided to the department. The department is committed to protecting the confidentiality of the information it receives and is bound by strict policies. Privacy information for doctors and patients is attached. Further copies can be downloaded at www.health.vic.gov.au/notify.

Further information

All notifications and related inquiries should be directed to:

Department of Health & Human Services

Reply Paid 65937, Melbourne VIC 8060

(No postage stamp required)

Telephone 1300 651160 (24 hours — after hours service available) or Facsimile 1300 651170

(1300 numbers are charged at the cost of a local call)


When notifying, remember to print clearly in CAPITALS and retain a copy of the notification for your records.
The Health Records Act 2001

The Health Records Act 2001 (HRA) aims to protect the privacy of an individual’s health information and how this information is managed. The Act applies to the Victorian Government sector, Victorian Government funded services, private health services within Victoria and any other organisations within Victoria that hold health information.

The Federal Privacy Act 1988

This federal legislation applies to the private sector, and services directly funded by the Australian Government.

How does privacy legislation fit with the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008?

They are complementary legislation. Privacy legislation does not replace legal obligations regulating the handling of personal and health information, such as the notification of conditions listed in the Regulations. They sit alongside existing protections such as medical confidentiality, and legislated responsibilities to disclose information where mandatory reporting exists.

What are my obligations regarding notifiable conditions and privacy?

Under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, doctors and laboratories are required by law to notify the Department of Health & Human Services of diagnoses of specified conditions. The Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 stipulate the information that must be provided. This includes demographic data, clinical history, the disease or condition diagnosed, risk factors, suspected modes of transmission and clinical comments.

The HRA requires you to inform your patient that this information is provided to the department, the reasons why it is provided and that there is a legal imperative to do so. The department has developed information sheets you can give your patient to assist with this process.

Can my patients refuse to allow the disclosure of this information to the department?

No—it is a legislative requirement that is designed to identify causes and risk factors for infectious diseases and other notifiable conditions and to protect public health and safety.

What about supplementary information collected through enhanced surveillance?

Supplementary information is considered as statistical information essential for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health services. The data collected are predominantly risk factors and clinical histories. The information collected, including sensitive information (for example, ethnicity, sexual preferences), is regarded as core data relevant to public health practice. The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 permits the disclosure of relevant clinical and risk factor information, and information about the suspected modes of transmission.

Where can I obtain further information?

Department of Health & Human Services:
• Communicable disease related enquiries
  1300 651 160
• Lead related enquiries
  1300 761 874
• Privacy
  1300 884 706
  privacyquery@health.vic.gov.au

Office of the Health Services Commissioner:

Australian Government Privacy Commissioner:
www.privacy.gov.au
Why is information collected about my illness?

Under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, the Department of Health & Human Services (the department) is authorised by law to collect information from doctors and laboratories about diagnoses of certain health conditions in Victoria. The law exists to monitor and control the occurrence of infectious diseases and other specified conditions, and helps to prevent further illness.

The aim is to protect the health and safety of the community.

What happens to my health information?

The department is committed to protecting the privacy of your information. Only authorised staff can access the information. The information is analysed regularly to produce reports, however identifying information is NEVER included in those reports.

Some conditions require immediate contact with either your doctor and/or yourself to identify the cause and prevent further infections. Information about your illness is obtained directly from yourself or your doctor. If it is necessary to contact you, we will try to get consent from your treating doctor first.

Sometimes your information may be provided to officers of local government (local council) who are authorised under the law to assist with investigations. Identifying information is never released to any parties not directly involved in the investigation of the source of your illness.

If you have been exposed to lead in an occupational setting, your information may be provided to WorkSafe. Under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007, an employer in a workplace where a lead process is undertaken is required to notify WorkSafe of any lead-risk jobs in that workplace, as well as when an employee is removed from a lead-risk job due to elevated blood lead levels.

Other uses of my information

The National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System – Some information on notifiable conditions is forwarded regularly to the Australian Government Department of Health, which is responsible for monitoring the occurrence of infectious diseases in Australia. Information that identifies you is always removed before this occurs.

Teaching – Some information is used to help educate staff, plan for the future and evaluate current service provision. Information that identifies you is always removed before this occurs.

Research and audit – Information is only made available for research projects after a Human Research Ethics Committee has approved them. Each Ethics Committee follows strict, nationally agreed guidelines for the review of research involving humans and health information. If anything to do with the research involves you personally, the researcher will contact you so you can decide if you want to take part. People who carry out research must follow strict guidelines and maintain the confidentiality of the information they access. Release of identifying information to researchers is extremely rare.

Can I, or my doctor, refuse to provide this information?

No. If the department is not provided with this information, there may be delays in preventing further exposure, and in planning control strategies. Doctors and pathology services are required by law to provide the department with key information about you and your illness.

Is my privacy protected?

Yes. All staff working in the department treat your information with the strictest confidence and have a legal duty to do so. Anyone who receives information from us is also under a legal obligation to keep it confidential.

Can I access my information?

Yes. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2001 you have the right to apply for information held by the department. The department keeps records in accordance with the Health Records Act.

Where can you find further information?

For infectious disease related enquires telephone 1300 651160. Further information can be found on the department’s website at:

- www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

For lead related enquires telephone 1300 761874. Further information can be found on the department’s website at:


WorkSafe Victoria can be contacted by telephoning 1800 136089, or at the following website:

- www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Information about the department’s Privacy Principles can be found on the department’s website at:


Information about making a Freedom of Information request can be found on the department’s website at:

The following Group A conditions require immediate notification by telephone on 1300 651160 (24 hours) to the Department of Health & Human Services on clinical suspicion or initial diagnosis (presumptive or confirmed), followed by written notification within five days to:

Department of Health & Human Services, Reply Paid 65937, Melbourne VIC 8060 or fax 1300 651170.

Please ensure the case (1) has been informed of their diagnosis, (2) has been advised that this information is being provided to the department (as required by the Health Records Act 2001), and (3) has been informed that the department may contact them for further information about their illness. Commonwealth and State privacy legislation does not negate the responsibility to notify the specified conditions nor to provide the information requested on this form.

Please indicate the condition you are notifying

- Anthrax
- Botulism
- Chikungunya virus infection
- Cholera
- Diphtheria
- Food or water borne illness (two or more related cases)
- Haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS)
- Hepatitis A
- Japanese encephalitis virus infection
- Haemophilus influenzae type b infection (Hib)
- Legionellosis
- Measles
- Meningococcal infection (invasive)
- Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)
- Murray Valley encephalitis virus infection
- Paratyphoid
- Plague
- Poliomyelitis
- Rabies
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)
- Smallpox
- Tularaemia
- Typhoid
- Viral haemorrhagic fevers
- Yellow fever

Case details – please answer all questions

Last name

First name(s)

Date of birth

Sex
- Male
- Female
- Other, specify

Residential address

City

Postcode

Tel home

Tel mobile

Parent/guardian/next of kin name

Is the case of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
- No
- Aboriginal
- Unknown
- Torres Strait Islander
- Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Country of birth
- Australia
- Overseas

...year arrived in Australia

Interpreter required
- No
- Yes, language

Works in a high risk occupation
- Child care worker
- Commercial food handler
- Health care worker
- Other, specify below

Occupation and/or school and/or child care attended

Has the case recently travelled interstate or overseas
- No
- Yes, specify when/where

Alive/deceased

...date of death

Date of onset of illness

Has laboratory testing been requested
- No
- Yes, specify lab
- Pending, specify lab

Clinical comments – include risk factors, mode of transmission, history of illness, symptoms etc.

Notifying doctor/hospital/laboratory details

Doctor/hospital/laboratory name

Medicare provider no.

Department use only

Address

City

Postcode

Telephone

Fax

Date
The following Group B conditions require written notification to the Department of Health & Human Services on initial diagnosis within five days to:

Department of Health & Human Services, Reply Paid 65937, Melbourne VIC 8060 or fax 1300 651170.

Please ensure the case (1) has been informed of their diagnosis, (2) has been advised that this information is being provided to the department (as required by the Health Records Act 2001), and (3) has been informed that the department may contact them for further information about their illness. Commonwealth and State privacy legislation does not negate the responsibility to notify the specified conditions nor to provide the information requested on this form.

Please indicate the condition you are notifying

- Arbovirus infection—other, specify:
- Barmah Forest virus infection
- Brucellosis
- Campylobacter infection
- Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD)
- Classical CJD
- Variant CJD
- Cryptosporidiosis
- Dengue virus infection
- Hepatitis B—Newly acquired
- Hepatitis B—Unspecified
- Hepatitis C—Newly acquired
- Hepatitis C—Unspecified
- Hepatitis D
- Hepatitis E
- Hepatitis viral (not further specified)
- Influenza (laboratory confirmed)
- Type A
- Type B
- Kunjin virus infection
- Lead (Blood lead >5 μg/dL)
- Leprosy
- Leptospirosis
- Listeriosis
- Lyssavirus
- Australian Bat lyssavirus
- Lyssavirus—other, specify:
- Rubella
- Congenital rubella
- Salmonellosis
- Shigatoxin and verotoxin producing Escherichia coli (STEC/VTEC)
- Shigellosis
- Tetanus
- Tuberculosis
- Pulmonary TB
- Extra-pulmonary TB
- Varicella zoster (chickenpox)
- Varicella zoster (shingles)
- Varicella zoster (unspecified)
- Malaria
- Mumps
- Mycobacterium ulcerans
- Pertussis
- Pneumococcal infection (invasive)
- Pertussis (omphalitis)
- Q fever
- Ross River virus infection
- Rabies
- Other, specify below

Case details—please answer all questions

- Last name
- First name(s)
- Date of birth
- Sex
- Male
- Female
- Other, specify
- Residential address
- City
- Postcode
- Tel home
- Tel mobile
- Parent/guardian/next of kin name
- Is the case of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
- No
- Aboriginal
- Torres Strait Islander
- Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Unknown
- Country of birth
- Australia
- Overseas
- ...country
- ...year arrived in Australia
- Interpreter required
- No
- Yes, language

Works in a high risk occupation
- Child care worker
- Commercial food handler
- Health care worker
- Other, specify below

Has the case recently travelled interstate or overseas
- No
- Yes, specify when/where

Alive/deceased
- Alive
- Died due to this condition
- Died due to other causes
- Date of death

Date of onset of illness

Has laboratory testing been requested
- No
- Yes, specify lab
- Pending, specify lab

Clinical comments—include risk factors, mode of transmission, history of illness, symptoms etc.

Notifying doctor/hospital/laboratory details

- Doctor/hospital/laboratory name
- Medicare provider no.
- Department use only
- Address
- City
- Postcode
- Telephone
- Fax
- Date
The following Group C conditions require written notification to the Department of Health & Human Services upon initial diagnosis within five days to:

Department of Health & Human Services, Reply Paid 65937, Melbourne VIC 8060 or fax 1300 651170.

Please ensure the case has been advised that this information is being provided to the department (as required by the Health Records Act 2001). Commonwealth and State privacy legislation does not negate the responsibility to notify the specified conditions nor to provide the information requested on this form.

Please indicate the condition you are notifying

- Chlamydia trachomatis infection
- Donovanosis
- Gonococcal infection
- Syphilis infection (less than 2 years)
  - Primary (chancre)
  - Secondary (rash)
  - Early latent
  - Is this a reinfection
    - Yes
    - No
- Syphilis (2 years or more duration or unknown)
  - Has this been adequately treated
    - Yes
    - No
- Congenital syphilis

Case details and history

Is the case HIV positive
- Yes
- No
- Unknown

Why was the case tested (tick all that apply)
- STI screening requested by case
- STI screening requested by doctor
- Case presented with clinical signs and symptoms of syphilis
- Case presented with clinical signs and symptoms of another STI
- Case was a contact of an infected individual
- Antenatal screening
- Post treatment follow-up
- Other, specify

If symptomatic, specify onset of illness (first symptom)

Where was the infection probably acquired
- Victoria
- Interstate, specify
- Overseas, specify
- Unknown

From whom was this infection probably acquired
- Casual partner
- Regular partner
- Sex worker
- Client (the case is a sex worker)
- Unknown

The sexual partner above was
- Person of opposite sex only
- Person of same sex only
- Persons of both sexes
- Sexual exposure unknown

Has laboratory testing been requested
- No
- Yes, specify lab
- Pending, specify lab

Clinical comments: Include risk factors, mode of transmission (if any) etcetera

Partner notification is the responsibility of the treating doctor and an essential component of the clinical and public health management of cases. If you require assistance or advice, the department’s partner notification officers can be contacted on (03) 9096 3367.

Please indicate below:
- I do not require assistance or advice with contact tracing
- I have already referred this case to partner notification officers

Notifying doctor/hospital/laboratory details

Doctor/hospital/laboratory name

Medicare provider no.

Department use only

Address

City

Postcode

Telephone

Fax

Date