

Notifiable Infectious Diseases

Key Points

Doctors have a statutory responsibility to notify if they suspect one of their patients has an infectious disease on the list of notifiable diseases

A form has to be filled in and sent to your Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC); information includes date of onset, patient address, name, sex, age

Where urgent public action is required the CCDC/duty public health doctor should be contacted by telephone

You should also inform the Infection Control Team if you diagnose a notifiable disease

The Law

The Public Health (Northern Ireland) Act 1967

“every medical practitioner attending on a person shall as soon as he becomes aware, or has reasonable grounds for suspecting, that the person is suffering from a notifiable disease, send to the medical officer of health for the area in which the examination took place a certificate stating:

- *the name, age, sex and address of the patient,*
- *the address of the building in which the examination took place, and*
- *the notifiable disease from which, in the opinion of the medical practitioner, the patient is, or may be, suffering”*

Guidelines

General Medical Council. Duties of a doctor. Serious Communicable Diseases. 1999

“You must disclose information about serious communicable diseases in accordance with the law. For example, the appropriate authority must be informed where a notifiable disease is diagnosed....”

In-house Interpretation

At the very least, a consultant in charge of a case has a duty to notify ward staff if a patient with an infection which is a risk to staff (such as HIV, TB or HBV) is admitted or to be admitted.

Notifiable Diseases

The diseases listed below require Notification to the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control. The aim of Notification is to identify infection risks and institute appropriate control measures as early as possible. Laboratory confirmation is not required for the purposes of notification as otherwise the public health and infection control response could be delayed. This may include identification and assessment of contacts.

If a patient is admitted to hospital with a diagnosis of, or suspected of having, any of the diseases listed below, the clinician in charge has a legal responsibility to notify the disease to the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control. This duty is normally carried out by the junior medical staff but is the responsibility of the doctor in charge of the patient.

Notification can be done by sending a completed notification form to the CCDC or by informing them of the patient details by telephone (the hospital switchboard will have contact details). Official Notification Books should be available in each ward and additional books can be obtained from the office of the local CCDC. In an emergency, the CCDC/duty public health doctor should be informed by telephone. This single path of referral will ensure that the appropriate action is taken as quickly as possible.

The Infection Control Team should also be informed by the notifying clinician Reference should be made in the clinical notes if the patient has been notified to the CCDC.

IF YOU ADMIT A PATIENT KNOWN TO HAVE ANY OF THESE DISEASES, PLEASE INFORM THE INFECTION CONTROL TEAM AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY.

Statutory Notifiable Infectious Diseases, 1990: Northern Ireland

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute encephalitis/meningitis: bacterial • Acute encephalitis/meningitis: viral • Anthrax • Chicken Pox • Cholera • Diphtheria • Dysentery • Food poisoning • Gastro-enteritis (persons aged < 2 years) • Hepatitis A • Hepatitis B • Hepatitis unspecified: viral • Legionnaire’s Disease • Leptospirosis • Malaria • Measles • Mumps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meningococcal septicaemia • Paratyphoid fever • Plague • Poliomyelitis (acute) • Rabies • Relapsing fever • Rubella • Scarlet fever • Smallpox • Tetanus • Tuberculosis: pulmonary and non-pulmonary • Typhoid fever • Typhus fever • Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers • Whooping cough • Yellow fever |
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NOTE: In addition, all potentially infectious diseases should be reported to the Infection Control Team. For further advice as to what to notify or report contact the CCDC.