

# ACUTE, SEVERE HEPATITIS OF UNKNOWN ETIOLOGY IN CHILDREN

**Date:** Friday, May 06, 2022  
**To:** Central Zone Physicians  
**From:** Dr. Ifeoma Achebe, Lead Medical Officer of Health, Central Zone  
Dr. Kristin Klein, Provincial Lead Medical Officer of Health, Communicable Disease Control  
**Subject:** ACUTE, SEVERE HEPATITIS OF UNKNOWN ETIOLOGY IN CHILDREN

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## Background

Since October 2021, there have been over 200 cases of acute hepatitis of unknown origin reported internationally in children and adolescents. The usual causes of acute viral hepatitis have not been detected in any of these cases. At this time, the etiology, disease pathogenesis and route of transmission are still unknown. Links to international travel or to vaccination, have not been identified as factors.

Alberta Health is closely monitoring the situation. To facilitate investigation, acute severe hepatitis of unknown etiology has now been made a reportable disease in Alberta.

## Case Definitions

- **Probable:** A person presenting with an acute hepatitis (**non hep A-E\* and without another definitive cause**) with serum transaminase >500 IU/L (AST or ALT), who is 16 years and younger.
- **Epi-linked:** A person presenting with an acute hepatitis (**non hep A-E\* and without another definitive cause**) of any age who is a close contact of a probable case.

*\*If hepatitis D-E serology results are pending, but other criteria met, these should be reported. Cases with an infectious agent identified, where the clinical presentation is atypical for that agent (such as rhinovirus or adenovirus), should also be reported.*

## Actions for Physicians

- Be vigilant for children up to and including 16 years of age presenting with signs and symptoms compatible with acute hepatitis.
- Physicians who see cases of acute severe hepatitis with unknown etiology should consult with a specialist (Pediatric Infectious Disease or Hepatology) to facilitate further investigation.

As you consider laboratory work to assess for more uncommon etiologies, consultation with the Virologist On-Call (VOC) is recommended. To page the virologist, please call Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) at:

- North: 1 (780) 407-8822
- South: 1 (403) 333-4942

Notify the zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH) by phone at (403) 356-6430, or by email at [moh.central@ahs.ca](mailto:moh.central@ahs.ca) of all probable and epi-linked cases within 48 hours of diagnosis.

The physician responsible for identifying the case will be asked to complete the [Acute Hepatitis \(non-hepatitis A-E\) Case Report Form](#) within 7 days of initial diagnosis. Available at: [www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/health-acute-hepatitis-non-hep-a-e-case-report-form.pdf](http://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/health-acute-hepatitis-non-hep-a-e-case-report-form.pdf).

Thank you for your participation with this surveillance. Your assistance is appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

This memo will be posted to MOH Bulletins for your reference at: [www.ahs.ca/moh](http://www.ahs.ca/moh).