

# Notifiable conditions in Victoria Quick guide for medical practitioners

health

Notifiable conditions are included in Schedule 4 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 and are divided into the following four groups on the basis of the method of notification and the information required. A medical practitioner who has reasonable grounds to believe that a patient has, or may have a notifiable condition, or has, or may have, died with a notifiable condition, must notify the Department of Health as follows:

**Group A conditions** require immediate notification by TELEPHONE upon initial diagnosis (presumptive or confirmed), followed by WRITTEN notification within five days.

- Anthrax
- Botulism
- Chikungunya virus infection
- Cholera
- Diphtheria
- Food or water borne illness (2 or more related cases)
- Haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS)
- Haemophilus influenzae type b infection (Hib) (epiglottitis, meningitis and other invasive infections)
- Hepatitis A
- Japanese encephalitis
- Legionellosis
- Measles
- Meningococcal infection (invasive)
- Murray Valley encephalitis virus
- Paratyphoid
- Plague
- Poliomyelitis
- Rabies
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)
- Smallpox
- Tularemia
- Typhoid
- Viral haemorrhagic fevers
- Yellow fever

**Group B conditions** require WRITTEN notification upon initial diagnosis within five days.

- Arbovirus infection - other
- Barmah Forest virus infection
- Brucellosis
- Campylobacteriosis
- Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (classical/variant)
- Cryptosporidiosis
- Dengue virus infection
- Hepatitis B (newly acquired/unspecified)
- Hepatitis C (newly acquired/unspecified)
- Hepatitis D
- Hepatitis E
- Hepatitis viral (not further specified)
- Influenza (laboratory confirmed) (types A and B)
- Kunjin virus infection
- Lead (blood lead >10 µg/dL)
- Leprosy
- Leptospirosis
- Listeriosis
- Lyssavirus (incl. Australian bat lyssavirus)
- Malaria
- Mumps
- Mycobacterium ulcerans
- Pertussis
- Pneumococcal infection (invasive)
- Psittacosis (ornithosis)
- Q fever
- Ross River virus infection
- Rubella (incl. congenital rubella syndrome)
- Salmonellosis
- Shigatoxin and verotoxin producing Escherichia coli (STEC/VTEC)
- Shigellosis
- Tetanus
- Tuberculosis (pulmonary/extrapulmonary)
- Varicella (chickenpox/herpes zoster (shingles))

Phone 1300 651 160



**Group C conditions** are sexually transmitted infections. They require WRITTEN notification within five days of initial diagnosis. To preclude identification of the patient, only the first two letters of the family and given name of the patient are required along with other prescribed details.

- Chlamydia trachomatis infection
- Donovanosis
- Gonococcal infection
- Syphilis (including congenital)

**Group D conditions** are HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). They require WRITTEN notification within five days of initial diagnosis. A separate form is used for this purpose, which is forwarded to the diagnosing medical practitioner with the laboratory confirmation of HIV infection.

**Further information**  
Phone 1300 651 160

Disease information, surveillance data and links to public health alerts can be found at [www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas)

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## Notifying is easy

### Group A conditions

1. Phone 1300 651 160 (local call), and
2. Send notification form via
  - fax 1300 651 170 (local call) *or*
  - post to Reply Paid 65937 Melbourne VIC 8060 *or*
  - online at [www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas)

### Group B, C and D conditions

1. Send notification form via
  - fax 1300 651 170 (local call) *or*
  - post to Reply Paid 65937 Melbourne VIC 8060 *or*
  - online at [www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas)

You can order notification forms and reply paid envelopes, or download notification forms online at [www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas)

## Your requirement to notify

Infectious diseases and other conditions of concern still occur frequently throughout the world, so constant vigilance is required to minimise their spread. Changes in lifestyle have also led to the emergence of new threats to public health from infection. Health authorities depend on both medical practitioners and pathology services for information on the incidence of these conditions. Notification is vital in efforts to prevent or control the spread of infection and to prevent further harmful exposures. 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 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 by telephone upon initial diagnosis (presumptive or confirmed), followed by written notification within five days.
- Group B** conditions require written notification to the Department of Health upon initial diagnosis within five days.
- Group C** conditions are the sexually transmissible infections and require written notification to the Department of Health 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. Initial notification can be made using this form. However a separate form is used for collecting additional data. Copies of this form are forwarded to the diagnosing medical practitioner with the laboratory confirmation of HIV infection and are available at [www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas).

The Department provides pre-printed Reply Paid envelopes (no stamps required) and STD toll free telephone and facsimile numbers to make notifying as simple as possible. Copies of the form, information on conditions, diseases and outbreaks, media releases, disease surveillance data, privacy information and other publications are all available at the Department of Health Internet site [www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas). You can also notify online.

## Privacy legislation

Commonwealth and State privacy legislation does not negate the responsibility to notify the specified conditions nor to provide the information requested on this form. Doctors have a responsibility to inform their patients that their information is being provided to the Department of Health. 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/ideas](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas)

## Further information

All notifications and related inquiries should be directed to:

**Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit**  
**Victorian Government Department of Health**  
**Reply Paid 65937, Melbourne VIC 8060**  
 (No postage stamp required)

**Telephone 1300 651160** (After hours service available) or  
**Facsimile 1300 651170**  
 (1300 numbers are charged at the cost of a local call)  
**Please PRINT clearly and retain a copy of the notification for your records.**

Thank you.

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# Notifiable conditions in Victoria

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Privacy legislation and notifiable conditions –  
Information for medical practitioners

## *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*

The 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. They do 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 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 patients 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 patients 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:

- Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit  
1300 651 160  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas)
- Environmental Health Unit (lead related enquiries)  
1300 761 874  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/environment](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment)
- Privacy Unit  
1300 884 706  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/privacy](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/privacy)  
[privacyquery@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:privacyquery@health.vic.gov.au)

Office of the Health Services Commissioner:  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc/](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc/)

Australian Government Privacy Commissioner:  
[www.privacy.gov.au](http://www.privacy.gov.au)

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# Notifiable conditions in Victoria

## Privacy information for patients

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### Why is information collected about your illness?

Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, the Department of Health (the department) is authorised by law to collect information from doctors and laboratories about diagnoses of certain health related 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 your 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 at 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 your information

**The National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System**  
– Some information on notifiable conditions is forwarded regularly to the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, which is responsible for monitoring the occurrence of infectious diseases throughout the whole of 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 the Department's 'Human Research Ethics Committee' has approved them. The 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 is extremely rare.

### Can you, or your doctor, refuse to provide this information?

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.

### What about confidentiality?

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.

*Continued overleaf*

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### Can you access your information?

Under the Freedom of Information Act 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 the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit can be contacted by telephoning **1300 651160**. Further information can be found on the department's website at:

- [www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas)
- [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

For lead related enquiries the Environmental Health Unit can be contacted on **1300 761874**. Further information can be found on the department's website at:

- [www.health.vic.gov.au/environment](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment)

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

- [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au)

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

- [www.health.vic.gov.au/privacy](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/privacy)

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

- [www.health.vic.gov.au/foi](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foi)

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## Notification resources re-order form

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Please forward orders to:

Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit  
Victorian Government Department of Health  
Reply Paid 65937, Melbourne VIC 8060  
(No postage stamp required)

Telephone 1300 651160 or Facsimile 1300 651170  
(1300 numbers are charged at the cost of a local call)

Name of doctor, clinic,  
laboratory or hospital

Address

City/Suburb/Town

Postcode

Contact person

Telephone

Number of notifiable conditions pads required?

Number of Free Post envelopes required?

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