



Written By

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Aim

Bermagui Preschool aims to effectively care for any child that may be infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection, AIDS Virus and also minimise the risk of exposure to HIV through effective hygiene practices.

The idea of HIV and AIDS being a threat to children can produce highly emotional reactions. Parents fear that they cannot protect their children against this threat. Yet HIV is probably the most preventable epidemic ever. Now we know how HIV is transmitted and what we can do to prevent it being transmitted. While fear is a natural reaction to the unknown, panic can cause unnecessary trauma to individuals and be destructive to the whole community

What is HIV and AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is caused by a virus called the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Once a person becomes infected with HIV they have it indefinitely and may transmit it to others at any stage of infection.

HIV damages our immune system by destroying the white blood cells that normally fight off infections and prevent the spread of certain cancers. With the body's defences weakened, other infections that are usually rare or of little danger can become life-threatening. When the disease reaches this stage it is known as AIDS.

How is HIV transmitted?

The risk of contracting AIDS is minimal and said to be about one in 1,000,000. HIV can get into your bloodstream through infected semen, blood or vaginal fluids. This can occur:

- through having anal or vaginal sexual intercourse without a condom
- through sharing needles and syringes for intravenous drug use
- through an infected woman passing HIV on to her baby in the womb, or possibly during the birth process or through breast-feeding
- through blood transfusion. This is not a problem in Australia any more due to the screening process used by the Blood Bank to ensure that blood donations are free of HIV

Can HIV be Transmitted in a Child Care Setting?

HIV is not transmitted through casual contact. You cannot become infected unless the virus gets into your blood stream. Outside a person's body it is a fragile virus, easily destroyed by exposure to air, soap, bleach, detergent, disinfectant and shaving cream. There is no known case anywhere in the world of HIV infection having been transmitted in child care settings or school. Usually normal hygiene procedures will eliminate the risk of HIV being spread in the Child Care Setting.

Implementation:

- Children with the HIV virus will be accepted into the service.
- Children who are infected with HIV will be assessed by their Doctor.
- Children who have abrasions or open wounds will cover them while at the service. If these abrasions cannot be covered for any reason unfortunately the child will have to be excluded from the service until the wound has healed or can be covered.

Practices:

Staff will:

- Always wash your hands
 - Before preparing food
 - Before eating (wash children's hands too)
 - After toileting yourself or a child
 - Before and after nappy changing
 - Before and after giving First Aid
- Wash blood, faeces and urine off your skin with warm soapy water
- Regularly clean floors, equipment and toys
- Clean up any spilt blood or faeces with a bleach solution of 1 part household bleach to 10 parts water
- Cover cuts and wounds on your skin or on a child's skin
- Wear disposable gloves when dealing with faeces, urine or blood or changing nappies
- If you get blood splashed in your eyes or on your face, rinse with running water for several minutes
- Soak any bloodied clothes or implements used for First Aid for 10 minutes in the recommended bleach solution of 1–10
- Wipe vinyl-covered nappy change pad with a bleach solution 1-10 after each nappy change
- If the nappy change pad is cloth-covered, use a roll of disposable paper towel to provide a clean liner for each nappy change
- If mouth to mouth resuscitation is required use a disposable mouth to mouth mask

Blood

There is very little risk of getting HIV through giving First Aid to someone who is bleeding. Theoretically it could occur if the accident victim was HIV – INFECTED, but only if you had an uncovered open wound or a skin disease like dermatitis and the accident victim's blood got into your bloodstream. If you get blood on you, wash it off with soapy water as soon as possible.

Saliva and Tears

HIV has been found in saliva and tears but not in sufficient concentrations to be a risk. Although this may be under question at the moment. Given this low concentration, spitting, kissing and wiping noses is considered safe.

Biting

This has always been a concern. There have been no cases in which biting has been proven as the way HIV was transmitted. For transmission through biting to occur, a significant quantity of infected blood would have to get into the uninfected child's bloodstream. This means both children would have to be bleeding when the bite occurred or the infected child would have to be bleeding and the uninfected child have an open wound or active skin disease.

If there is a biting incident where the skin is broken, wash the bitten area thoroughly with warm soapy water, and rinse the biting child's mouth out.

Faeces and Urine

Wherever blood is present, including blood found in faeces and urine, extreme care must be taken. However, because blood is not always visible in faeces and urine all bodily wastes should be handled with appropriate hygiene procedures.

There is a risk of catching other common more easily transmitted infections like Hepatitis A or B and gastroenteritis if basic standards of hygiene are not maintained. Hygiene procedures to prevent the spread of these infectious diseases are more than adequate to prevent the spread of HIV.

If you have a cut or lesion ex. Dermatitis or eczema on your hands, cover it. Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with faeces, urine or blood. Healthy skin provides an adequate barrier to infection so it's important to look after your skin. Use hand cream after washing your hands.

Vomit

The virus is not found in vomit: gastric juices in the stomach destroy it.

Confidentiality

If a staff member is told that a child or a child's parent or another staff member is infected with HIV this information must remain confidential.

If it is considered that other members of staff should be informed, this can only occur with the consent of the HIV infected person or the parents/guardian of the child concerned.

Staff members who have been infected with HIV are not obliged to divulge this information or their condition to their employer but are expected to act in a responsible manner towards other staff members, parents and children in their care. They should be aware of the dangers of accidental transmission of their blood and body fluids and take steps to prevent this.

Resources & References

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
 Early Years Learning Framework 2009
 National Quality Standard 2010
 Public Health (Amendment) Act 1991
 Anti Discrimination Act 1997
 Staying Healthy in Child Care 5TH Edition, Preventing infectious diseases in child care
 - National Health and Medical Research Council

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