



## 3.31 Infectious & Communicable Diseases

### Information Sheet

#### Purpose

The purpose of this Information Sheet is to provide assistance to individuals and Schools/Branches on what steps to take when dealing with a communicable or infectious disease. This information sheet does not cover working with infectious material, for information on this please refer to the relevant risk assessment/Safe Operating Procedures. [Biological Safety Management](#) and Australian Standard 2243 (2010) Safety in Laboratories Part 3: Microbiological Safety and Containment.

#### Q1 What is the definition of an infectious disease and communicable disease?

Infectious disease is an illness caused by the spread of prions or micro-organisms (bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites) to humans, animals or the environment, including food and water.

Communicable Disease is a disease capable of being transmitted from an infected person or species to a susceptible host, either directly or indirectly.

Some infectious/communicable diseases are deemed to be notifiable conditions (a disease or medical condition, which present a serious threat to the community) that require a GP or medical specialist to notify to the public health authorities on diagnosis. The University like other employers does not notify diseases to SA Health; this is undertaken by the patients diagnosing GP or other medical practitioner. Where a GP has notified the Department of Health (SA Health) regarding a notifiable disease that has the potential to impact staff or students at the University then SA Health may ask the University to undertake specific actions, such as providing health information to certain groups of staff or students.

#### Q2 What if the School/Branch is informed that a person has or may have an infectious or communicable disease?

- Any person is entitled to **confidentially** regarding their health issues and a workplace/study environment **free from discrimination**;
- Where an individual has an illness that is easily spread to other staff (like flu or gastro) the individual should follow the instructions of their doctor and not attend work until they are non-contagious;
- Where a staff member is clearly unwell it is not unreasonable for a supervisor to ask the staff member to go home and/or see a doctor to determine if the staff member should be on sick leave.
- Staff members do not normally have to disclose their medical history (for more information please refer to Q3);
- For further advice please contact Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) team.

#### Q3 What if I have an infectious and/or communicable disease?

##### Am I required to reveal my medical history?

A Staff member with an infectious/communicable disease is expected to act responsibly by following the directions and advice of their medical practitioner.

There is no obligation on any person to disclose their medical history except where required as a medical practitioner (doctor, nurse or dentist), and then any disclosure would be to their employer or placement provider in that capacity i.e. the hospital.

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**Q3 What if I have an infectious and/or communicable disease? Continued.****What are my rights?**

Staff and students have the following rights:

- The right to confidentiality of information relating to their health;
- A study or work environment free from discrimination and harassment; and
- Access to clearly defined grievance processes.

The discrimination or harassment of any person for any reason will not be tolerated (see the HSW Handbook chapter on [Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying](#) and [Fair Treatment Policy and Guidelines](#)), excepting any specific protocols that SA Health and/or hospitals may have regarding disclosures by medical practitioners and the management of risk of cross infection to patients.

**Is there support?**

The University provides free and confidential counselling services available to staff ([Employee Assistance Program](#)) and students ([Student Counselling Service](#)).

**Q4 What if my School/Branch is notified by the Department of Health regarding a staff/student that has contracted a notifiable condition?**

If the School/Branch receives a notification from SA Health **they must immediately contact** the Associate Director, HR Policy, Safety and Compliance 0410 422 737 or Manager, Safety and HR Compliance 0404 489 059, who will handle the response on behalf of the University. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times.

**Q5 What happens if a person in the University contracts a notifiable condition?**

If a person in the University contracts a notifiable condition they should follow the advice of their doctor.

The staff member's doctor is responsible for notifying the Department of Health (SA Health). Once notified SA Health will determine what steps need to be taken. The University does not need to undertake any steps unless directed by the SA Health.

**Q6 What happens in the situation of a pandemic?**

The University's Emergency Management Incident Management Task Group will co-ordinate the response for the University under the direction of the Department of Health (SA Health). The University of Adelaide has a Pandemic Action Plan and when needed it will convene a Working Party which will monitor the situation and possible impacts on the University of Adelaide, for more information please contact the Associate Director, HR Policy, Safety and Compliance.

For more information refer to Health Alerts on the HSW Website.

<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/hr/hsw/wellbeing/health-alerts/>

**Further information****HSW Handbook and other University Policies**

[Biological Safety Management](#)  
[Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying](#)  
[Disability Action Plan](#)  
[Fair Treatment](#)  
[Code of Conduct](#)

**Legislation and Australian Standards**

[South Australia Public Health Act 2011](#)  
[South Australian Public Health \(Notifiable and Controlled Notifiable Conditions\) Regulations 2012](#)  
[Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) – Section 48 - Infectious Diseases  
[Work Health Safety Act 2012](#)  
[Guidelines for Managing Blood-Borne Virus Infection in Health Care Workers](#)  
[AS/NZS 2243.3 \(2010\) Safety in laboratories – Microbiological aspects and containment facilities](#)

**Websites**

**Pandemic Influenza**  
<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/hr/hsw/wellbeing/health-alerts/>  
**Communicable Disease**  
<http://www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs/communicable-diseases-index.htm>

Should you be unable to access any of the abovementioned standards or require further information, please contact the [HSW Team](#).

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