

# HEPATITIS B

Life Was Easier

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## *A Parent's Perspective*

### **When a Child Has Hepatitis B**

By an Anonymous Parent

Life was so much easier when Kris, my second-grade son who has chronic hepatitis B, was younger. For one thing, he now spends almost six hours a day at school. That means I'm not Johnny-on-the-spot to make sure that standard precautions are used when he falls and hurts himself. Now, I have to rely on the good sense of others and that worries me sick.

One day on the playground he knocked off a wart on his knee and it bled all over the place. I don't know how the school handled the blood – I didn't want to grill Kris about it because I didn't want him to think that it was any big deal – but I still get nightmares thinking about it.

When he was younger I had so much more control over his life, over what he knew and what he didn't know. When I took him to the doctor he wasn't happy about it but he probably thought everybody else went through the same thing. It wasn't until he got to school and started comparing notes with his new friends that he realized he was treated differently.

His friends almost never left school for doctor appointments. We were evangelistic about standard precautions. His friends, and his teachers for that matter, didn't seem to think that blood should be treated any differently than spilled paint. I had to ask Kris to be responsible for his own boo-boos and that seems so unfair for someone his age.

I also had to teach him to be very careful about what he says to other people at school. It is so hard on him! He worships his teachers and wants to share things about his life. Still, I don't want him talking about lots of doctor visits or his treatment. I'm afraid his teachers will figure out that something is wrong and either start treating him differently – or pump him for information. I could just see a teacher innocently asking Kris about missing school and him telling her in gory detail everything that the doctor did.

He's such a trusting, open child. I don't want to make him feel different from everybody else, but I also don't want him asking for trouble. It's such a fine line.

I could just see Kris talking to his friends on the playground and them, in turn, passing his comments on to their parents. How do I convince him that it's not a good idea to share certain things with his friends and teachers even if there's no reason to be ashamed of them? I'm not ready yet to tell him about the hepatitis but I still have to deal with all of these related issues. It's just tearing me apart.