

Significant exposure to bloodborne viruses



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INFORMATION LEAFLET

What is the chance I will develop an infection?

Hepatitis B

If someone is exposed to blood infected with hepatitis B virus, e.g. needlestick injury, the transmission rate can be as high as 30%. For this reason, your hepatitis B immune status will have been considered. If you are thought to be not immune to hepatitis B infection, you will be offered vaccination – either completion of the course if you already had one or two doses, or the first of three doses of the vaccine if you have never been vaccinated against hepatitis B. In some circumstances, people may also be offered hepatitis immunoglobulin.

Hepatitis C

Following exposure to blood infected with hepatitis C virus, e.g. needlestick injury, the risk of developing an infection is about 1.8%.

HIV:

Only about 0.3% of those who report a needlestick injury from a patient known to be infected with HIV will develop HIV. The risk of infection following exposure to a splash of blood to your eye or into your mouth is lower, about 0.09%. Exposure to other body fluids is associated with an even lower risk. There is no risk associated with blood exposure to intact skin.

The management of your injury is considered on an individual basis depending on the nature of the injury.

If I do not know, for example, who used the needle before my injury or do not know who injured or assaulted me, does this change my treatment?

You reported an exposure to blood and body fluids from an “unknown source”. In this circumstance, it is not possible to exclude the possibility of infection. The risk that you may develop an infection, however, is lower than the risk highlighted above.

What happens next?

You should have been given follow-up appointment dates, or advised how to access follow-up appointments. Follow-up appointments are necessary in order for you to receive test results, get additional blood tests done or receive further hepatitis B vaccinations. It is important that you attend all follow-up appointments. Take note of follow-up appointment instructions at the back of this leaflet. If you have been given hepatitis B vaccine, a hepatitis B reminder card will be given to you.

Is there anything I need to do while I wait for results of the blood tests?

The follow-up is not complete until 3 months after the injury. In the mean time, if you develop symptoms such as fever, any rash, sore throat, swollen glands, mouth ulcers, diarrhoea, joint or muscle pain, headaches, nausea or vomiting, reduced appetite, weight loss or fatigue, please contact your doctor and arrange a review appointment.

Am I allowed to be a blood donor while I am waiting on the results?

You should avoid donating blood or other body fluids, tissues or organs, for the duration of the follow-up period, to limit the risk of passing on any possible infection.

Are there any other additional precautions that I need to take?

Depending on the nature of your injury, additional precautions may also be necessary.

- Pregnancy and breastfeeding should be avoided if possible.
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors or needles.
- Adopt safer sex practices i.e. use a condom for the next three months.
- There is no need to restrict your work practices while awaiting the results of these blood tests.

If you have any concerns regarding this advice or wish to receive counselling, please discuss this with your doctor.

Where will I be attending for my next appointment (including contact details)?

When is this appointment?