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Testing for hepatitis B, hepatitis C & HIV

Source information leaflet



Introduction

An incident has occurred in which another person became exposed to your blood or body fluid. Because of the nature of the exposure, there is a need to carry out a blood test to check if you have certain viruses that can be transmitted if present in your blood. These viruses are hepatitis B, hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). A negative test result will reduce the other person's anxiety and eliminate the need for them to undergo unnecessary treatment.



Testing for the viruses

- A blood test will be carried out on you in order to assess if you already have these viruses.
- The result of this test will be treated as confidential and used only for the purposes of confirming your infection status at the time of the incident. If your test is positive and this was previously unknown to you, the results will be sent confidentially to your own doctor whose name you provided. The results of your blood test may have to be disclosed to the person who was exposed to your blood or body fluid.

What does the blood test involve?

- Before the test, you will be provided with information to allow you to give your informed consent to the test. You will not be tested without your given consent. It is similar to a normal blood test that you may have had before. It should only take a few minutes and you will be advised when to expect the results. You have the right to refuse to be tested. If you choose not to be tested, your care will not be affected.

What happens if the blood test is negative?

- This means that you tested negative for the viruses at the time of the blood test. No further testing will be required.

What happens if the blood test is positive?

- In the event that the blood test is positive for one of these viruses and this was previously unknown to you, you will be referred to a specialist for follow-up. Your own doctor will receive a confidential letter outlining your results.

Are there any implications of a positive test?

- If the test is positive for any of these bloodborne viruses, you will be referred to a specialist for follow up assessment and management.
- Depending on the type of insurance policy, you may be required to inform your insurer that you have tested positive for any of these bloodborne viruses where you have an existing policy or when making a new application
- You will have to inform your sexual partner(s) and you should have been given advice regarding the need for safer sex practices.
- You will need to inform relevant agencies if you are considering donating blood products or other body tissues.
- You should not share shaving blades or razors, toothbrushes and needles.
- You should get expert advice about pregnancy and breast feeding.
- Hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV are notifiable diseases and positive results will be notified confidentially to the medical officer of health.

Counselling

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

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