

What You Should
Know if You
Have Come into
Contact with
**BLOOD OR
BODY FLUIDS**



FEBRUARY 2019

INFECTIONS SUCH AS HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), hepatitis B and hepatitis C can be spread to you (the Exposed) if you come in contact with the blood or body fluid of an infected person (the Source).

While the greatest chance of infection is contact with infected blood, other body fluids that could be infectious are:

- semen and vaginal secretions
- breast milk
- fluids that are in or around the brain, spinal cord, joints, lungs, heart, abdomen and pregnant woman's uterus
- saliva or any other body fluid *that contains visible traces of blood*

Contact with infected blood and body fluids can happen if you:

- get poked with a needle or cut with an instrument that was used on another person
- share needles, razors, toothbrushes, etc.
- have sex (including vaginal and/or anal sex)
- get splashed with blood or body fluids
- bite, or get bitten by, another person

The greatest chance of getting an infection is when fresh blood or body fluid from an infected person gets into you through a poke, cut, or open area on your skin.

What should I do immediately if I come into contact with another person's blood or body fluids?

- If you are poked with a needle, or cut with an instrument that was used on another person:
 - Let your wound bleed freely to clean it. Don't squeeze it.
 - Wash your wound gently with soap and water. Don't scrub.
- If body fluids splash into your eyes, nose or mouth, wash them with lots of water.
- If body fluids come into contact with non-intact skin such as open wounds, rinse them thoroughly with running water.
- If contact occurs in your workplace, tell your supervisor immediately.
- If contact occurs in the community, call your health care provider or call Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 immediately.

What are my risks of infection after contact?

Your risk of infection is generally very low and depends on the:

- type of infection
- type of body fluid that gets into your body
- type of contact
- amount of virus in the Source's blood (at the time of contact)

Should I get tested for infections such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C?

Testing is strongly recommended if there is contact with a body fluid that may be infected.

- Both you and the person whose blood and body fluids you come into contact with should be tested. This may help decide what, if any, treatment you need.
- Testing is voluntary. You and the other person must give consent before testing is done. Both people have the right to refuse testing, except when the Source's test has been ordered by a court in accordance with law (*The Testing of Bodily Fluids and Disclosure Act*).
- You should be tested immediately, then again in six weeks to three months, and a third time, four to six months after contact with blood or body fluid.

Is testing confidential?

Yes. All information and test results will be kept confidential.

The Source's test results will be provided to your and the Source's physicians, or, if either physician is unknown, the medical officer of health.

What should I do during the follow-up period?

If you become infected from contact with blood or body fluid, you can pass the infection to others if they come in contact with your blood or body fluids. Take the precautions listed below to prevent transmitting infection to others.

For at least six months, or for the length of time your health care provider tells you:

- Do not let others get your blood or body fluids on them. If they do, the person should follow instructions in the section “What should I do immediately if I come into contact with another person’s blood or body fluids?”
- Tell your sexual partners that they could be at risk. Use latex condoms during sex (including vaginal and/or anal sex).
- Do not get pregnant.
- Do not share a razor, toothbrush, nail file or tweezers.
- Do not donate blood, semen, organs and tissues.
- Stop breastfeeding until you talk with your health care provider.
- See your health care provider if you get any of the following symptoms during this time:
 - fever
 - jaundice (yellow eyes or skin)
 - sore throat
 - vomiting (throwing up)
 - swollen lymph nodes
 - rash
 - nausea (upset stomach)
 - reduced appetite
 - fatigue (tiredness)
 - muscle aches

INFECTION

HIV

HEPATITIS B

HEPATITIS C

What is it?

→ HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). This virus damages the immune system, which protects you against infections.

→ It is a virus that infects the liver. It is different than hepatitis A and C, but similar in that all three affect the liver.

→ It is a virus that infects the liver. It is a different virus than hepatitis A and B.

What are the symptoms?

→ A person can have HIV for many years with no symptoms.
→ When symptoms occur, they include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite and rash.
→ As the immune system weakens, a person becomes sick more often from germs the person is in contact with day-to-day.
→ AIDS is a late stage of the HIV infection.
→ People who have AIDS become more and more sick and may die.

→ Many people who get hepatitis B never feel sick and they recover completely.
→ Other people have a short illness. They feel tired and lose their appetite. Their skin and/or eyes turn yellow (jaundice).
→ A very small number of people get very ill and die.

→ Many people who have hepatitis C have no symptoms and they feel healthy for years.
→ Other people feel tired, have joint pain or don't feel like eating. Some people get yellow skin and eyes (jaundice).

What are the complications?

→ This virus damages the immune system, which protects a person from infections. People with HIV do not have this protection. They can get many different infections and may die from these infections.

→ Of all the adults who become infected with hepatitis B, most recover and a few develop chronic hepatitis. People with chronic hepatitis are called carriers.
→ Of all people with chronic hepatitis B infection, a few will die of liver cancer or scarring (cirrhosis) later on in life.

→ In most cases, people who have hepatitis C get a chronic infection. This causes symptoms for years.
→ The worst effect is scarring and severe damage to the liver (cirrhosis).
→ A small number of people may get liver cancer.

INFECTION

HIV

HEPATITIS B

HEPATITIS C

How is it spread?

The virus is spread when blood, semen or vaginal fluids from an infected person enters another person's body. This can happen:

- by accidentally poking yourself with a used needle
- by sharing drug snorting or injection equipment such as needles and syringes
- by having unprotected sex with an infected person
- by a pregnant woman infecting her baby at the time of birth
- by sharing a toothbrush or razor

People who had a blood transfusion in Canada before 1985 may have been infected.

Nearly half of the people who have hepatitis B never feel sick. They can spread the disease without knowing it. It is spread when blood or body fluids from an infected person enter another person's body. This can happen:

- by accidentally poking yourself with a used needle
- by sharing drug snorting or injection equipment such as needles and syringes
- by having unprotected sex with an infected person
- by a pregnant woman infecting her baby at the time of birth
- by living in a house with other people who have hepatitis B
- by sharing a toothbrush or razor

People who had a blood transfusion in Canada before 1970 may have been infected.

The virus is spread most often by direct contact with the blood of an infected person. This can happen by:

- accidentally poking yourself with a used needle
- sharing drug snorting or injection equipment such as needles and syringes
- sharing a toothbrush or razor

People who had a blood transfusion in Canada before April 1992 may have been infected.

Is there treatment?

There is no cure for HIV infection or AIDS at this time. The virus remains in the body for life. There are drugs available that slow down the progress of the virus and will allow a person to live a normal lifespan. None of them are a cure.

Yes. Treatment can help some people with chronic hepatitis B.

Yes. Treatment can help some people with hepatitis C.

Is there treatment to prevent getting HIV, hepatitis B or C, if exposed?

There is some treatment to prevent getting infected. The need for preventive treatment depends on:

- the type of body fluid
- the type of exposure
- whether or not the Source is known and was tested and the results are known

The health care provider will decide this with you. If you are exposed, the best time to see a health care provider is within two hours of the exposure.

The table below has more information about prevention treatments. Once further assessment is made, your health care provider may recommend some, or all, of these treatments.

Type of Infection	Preventive Treatment
HIV	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ There is no vaccine to prevent HIV infection.→ In some cases, certain medicines, if taken very soon after exposure to blood or body fluids, may prevent infection. These need to be started within two to four hours of exposure and are usually taken for 28 days.
Hepatitis B	<p>If you are immune, no further treatment is needed. You are considered immune if you completed a full series of hepatitis B vaccination, or had hepatitis B infection in the past, and a blood test shows you have built immunity to it.</p> <p>If you are NOT immune, you may be given one or more doses of hepatitis B vaccine with or without Hepatitis B Immune Globulin (HBIG).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ HBIG should be given within 48 hours, but can be given up to seven days after exposure.→ The first dose of hepatitis B vaccine should be given at the same visit as HBIG, but at a different site on the body. The number and timing of subsequent doses would depend on the vaccine dose used for your age and whether you have been previously vaccinated.
Hepatitis C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C.→ If you become positive for hepatitis C, early treatment may prevent chronic infection.

Medicines that reduce the risk of HIV infection

Why take these medicines?

- Your risk of infection from the HIV virus after contact with blood and certain body fluids depends on many things, including the type of exposure and type of body fluid.
- Early drug treatment may prevent the infection. If treatment is delayed, the infection may not be prevented but may be less severe.

When should I start taking the medicines?

- The effectiveness of the treatment is affected by the length of time between the exposure and when you start taking the medicines.
- If possible, treatment should start within two to four hours after the possible exposure to HIV.
- Treatment should start not later than three days following the possible exposure to HIV. Regardless, a health care provider must be consulted in all situations.

Treatment that reduces the risk of hepatitis B infection

Hepatitis B Immune Globulin

What is Hepatitis B Immune Globulin (HBIG)?

HBIG is made of antibodies against hepatitis B. Antibodies are proteins in the blood that our immune system makes to fight germs after we have been exposed to them.

Why is HBIG needed?

HBIG gives you immediate protection against the virus and lasts for several months. Unless you are considered immune to hepatitis B, HBIG may be given as soon as possible after an exposure to blood or body fluid potentially carrying hepatitis B.

How is HBIG given?

HBIG is given by injection (needle) into the arm. In young children, it is injected into the thigh muscle. It is usually given at the same visit as the first dose of hepatitis B vaccine, but at a different site on the body.

Hepatitis B Vaccine

What is hepatitis B vaccine?

It is a vaccine that stops a person from becoming infected with hepatitis B. The vaccine will only help people who do not already have hepatitis. Hepatitis B vaccine is very effective.

Why is Hepatitis B vaccine given?

Hepatitis B vaccine gives long-term protection against the virus. The protection usually lasts for many years.

How is the vaccine given?

It is given by injection (needle) into the muscle of the arm or leg.

For more information about HIV, hepatitis B or C, contact your health care provider or call: Health Links—Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257.

Available in alternate formats upon request.