

# Blood-borne Infections

Information for Personal Services Setting Operators

## What are blood-borne infections?

- Blood-borne infections are transmitted through blood and/or body fluids such as semen, vaginal secretions and, in some cases, saliva.
- Hepatitis B, hepatitis C and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) are blood-borne infections.

**You do not have to see blood or body fluids on instruments, equipment or surfaces for an infection to occur.**

## Facts on blood-borne infections:

- Hepatitis B is the most infectious blood-borne infection. Hepatitis B vaccination is very effective against this infection. It is strongly recommended for those providing invasive procedures.
- The Hepatitis B virus can survive on surfaces such as metal, cotton and glass for up to one week.
- An individual infected with hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV may not show symptoms of illness but is still infectious and able to spread the infection to others.
- There are **no** vaccines to protect you from getting HIV or hepatitis C.
- Hepatitis B and hepatitis C affect the liver, while HIV causes AIDS, a disorder of the body's immune system.

## Blood-borne infections are spread by:

- Instruments and/or equipment that are used from one client to the next without appropriate cleaning and disinfection and/or sterilization. **Single-use, disposable items** are strongly recommended whenever possible.
- Splashing of blood and/or body fluids into open wounds, the eyes, mouth or nose.
- Unprotected sexual intercourse and other unprotected contact with semen or vaginal secretions. Condoms, dental dams or other barrier methods should be used if there is a risk of exposure.

## **Protect Yourself - Protect Your Clients**

- Since some people may not know they are infected with a blood-borne infection, assume all clients are potentially infected.
- Practice hand hygiene before and after each client using liquid soap and warm water or alcohol-based hand rub.
- Single-use, disposable gloves must be worn for every client if blood exposure is likely. Discard gloves after use on each client. Practice hand hygiene before and after using gloves.
- Only single-use, disposable, sterile needles and blades must be used.
- Discard needles and blades immediately after use into an approved, puncture-resistant sharps container. Never overfill, empty or touch contents of sharps containers.
- Always clean and disinfect and/or sterilize non-disposable instruments and equipment between clients to reduce the possibility of transmitting blood-borne infections.
- Get vaccinated against the hepatitis B virus. For more information, discuss vaccination with your health care provider or with the public health unit.
- If there is a blood exposure incident, the exposed person should seek medical attention as soon as possible.
- Keep accidental blood exposure records on site for a minimum of one year and on file for a minimum of five years. Records must include the following information:
  - First and last name of person exposed
  - Address and phone number of person exposed
  - First and last name of personal service worker involved
  - Date of injury
  - Site of injury
  - Circumstances surrounding incident
  - Action taken

**For more information please contact the Infectious Disease Control Team at  
519-663-5317 ext. 2330 or visit [www.healthunit.com](http://www.healthunit.com)**

### Sources:

Heymann, D.L. (2004). *Control of communicable diseases manual*. (18<sup>th</sup> ed). Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2009). *Infection prevention and control best practices for personal services settings*. Retrieved from [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/pubhealth/oph\\_standards/ophs/progstds/pdfs/pssp\\_2008.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/pubhealth/oph_standards/ophs/progstds/pdfs/pssp_2008.pdf)

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