



Exposure to Another Person's Blood or Body Fluids

What infections can be spread from blood or body fluids?

The infections that can be spread from one person to another through infected blood or other body fluids are hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus).

Body fluids capable of spreading any of these infections include blood, semen, vaginal fluid, cerebral spinal fluid, body tissues and organs.

Saliva does not contain HIV or hepatitis C, but may contain small amounts of hepatitis B. Breast milk can contain HIV. Urine, feces, vomit, and tears do not carry these infections. However, any of the body fluids listed here can carry hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV if blood is present.

What is the risk of infections from body fluids?

For an infection to spread, it must be present in the blood or body fluid of another person and have a way to get into your blood stream. This can happen:

- when needles are shared or you have a needle stick injury
- when blood or body fluid comes in contact with skin that is damaged or cut, especially when a cut or abrasion is less than 3 days old
- when infected fluids are splashed or in any way enters your eyes, nose or mouth
- during sexual activity where body fluids are shared

The risk of becoming infected from an exposure to blood or body fluids is greater:

- when the amount of blood is of a large volume
- when the cut or entry point into your body is large or deep

Risk will also depend on what infections the other person has, and whether or not you have previously been vaccinated against Hepatitis B.

Contact between infected blood and healthy skin will not spread infections, as healthy skin acts as a very good barrier to viruses.

What do I do if I am exposed?

The best action to take is to be assessed at an emergency department as soon as possible after your exposure. You will receive first aid if needed and be assessed for risk of exposure to an infection. You may receive some blood tests to help determine if you need any special treatment. There are some medications that can be taken after an exposure that may prevent you from becoming infected. These treatments are called Post Exposure Prophylaxis or PEP for short.

What treatments can I have to prevent me from getting an infection?

There are treatments to prevent the spread of hepatitis B and HIV infections after a possible exposure. There is no treatment yet that can stop the spread of hepatitis C once an exposure has occurred.

For hepatitis B, vaccination and/or immune globulin may be an option to give your body immunity. If you have been vaccinated for hepatitis B in the past you may already be immune and will need no additional treatment. A blood test can show whether you are immune or not.

For HIV, there are medications that help to prevent the virus from infecting you. The medications are strong and do have side effects and are recommended only for high risk exposures. The treatment, to work well for you, should be started as soon as possible after an exposure - ideally within 2 hours.

Who can you talk to if you have more questions? If you have concerns or questions call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website www.simcoemuskokahealth.org



Tel: 705-721-7520
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

Your Health Connection



How can I find out if the other person is infected?

If you are worried that the person you've been exposed to (source person) has hepatitis B, C or HIV you may be able to ask that person to voluntarily have a test and share the results.

However, you should know that if the person was very recently infected, it may be too soon to detect the infection.

For this reason, you should keep in mind that a negative result does not always mean the person is free of infection. It is important for you to have your own tests done.

The health care provider providing your care will advise you about what tests you should have and when you should have them done.

What if the other person refuses to be tested?

There is a law called the Mandatory Blood Testing Act that allows some people in specific situations to submit an application to ask that a source person be ordered to provide a blood sample that will test for hepatitis B, C and HIV. You can learn more about this at the web site for the Ministry for Community Safety and Correctional Services: http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/LinksResources/MandatoryBloodTesting/blood_testing.html This application must be submitted within 7 days of your exposure, and can take some time to be processed (likely days to weeks); it is important not to wait for this application to start any treatment or testing your health care provider recommends at the time of your exposure.

What should I do after possible exposure?

It is very important for you to make sure you go for any follow-up testing recommended. You should speak to your health care provider about what you should do to protect others while you are waiting for your follow up tests.

What are the precautions I should take to protect others?

Follow these precautions for at least 6 months or for the time period your health care provider has advised, until all your blood test results are known

- Do not let your blood or body fluid get on another person
- Tell your sexual partners they could be at risk.
- Abstain from having sex or use condoms during sex (including oral, vaginal and/or anal sex).
- Avoid becoming pregnant during this time
- Do not share a razor, toothbrush, nail file or tweezers.
- Do not share needles or drug equipment with anyone
- Do not donate blood, semen, organs and tissues.
- See your health care provider if you develop any of these symptoms in the 6 months following your exposure: fever, rash, jaundice (yellowing of skin or eyes), nausea or upset stomach, lack of appetite, vomiting, tiredness, muscle aches, swollen glands

Who can you talk to if you have more questions? If you have concerns or questions call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

If you have experienced an exposure to another person's blood or body fluids, it is important that you be assessed by a health care provider to determine your risk of infection and to get appropriate and timely treatment to help prevent transmission of hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV.