

Occupational blood / body fluid exposure are a small but real risk to health care providers.

## First Aid

- Wash with soap and water immediately where the exposure is a cut or a puncture.
- If eyes are contaminated, then rinse them while they are open, gently but thoroughly (for at least 30 seconds) with water or normal saline.
- If blood or other body fluids get in the mouth, spit them out and then rinse the mouth with water several times.
- If clothing is contaminated, remove clothing and shower if necessary.
- Inform an appropriate person to ensure that necessary further action is undertaken.

## Exposures are not all the same

In the instance of a needlestick, if the person who the needle was used on previously (the “source”) is infected with a blood borne virus such as hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV) or human immune-deficiency virus (HIV), the person who suffers the needlestick (the “contact” person) can become infected.

Typical risks of being infected by needlestick from a carrier if you are not immune:

- HBV 30%
- HCV 3%
- HIV 0.3%

These are approximate risks estimated from health-care workers with a variety of exposures. Some carriers have higher viral loads in their blood and are much more infectious.

The figure for HBV can vary from 5% to 30% depending on how infectious the carrier is at the time.

HBV vaccination usually gives complete protection, but up to 5% of people do not respond to the vaccine and are probably still susceptible. A blood test after vaccination can check this.

HIV carriers who have developed AIDS are much more infectious. HIV and HBV and HCV carriers who are having treatment will usually be much less infectious.

The type of needle (hollow vs solid) and severity of injury are also important factors in determining risk.

## Get tested

(You) the “Contact” person should be tested to check for your hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV status. This is very important for legal and ACC purposes. Your written consent is required for these tests at the time of the accident. Your blood should be taken for testing as soon as possible after the accident. Your blood can be taken by anyone trained in venepuncture in your department. If no one is available, you can attend your nearest lab.

## Check the results

Keep in touch with the person managing your incident – this should normally be your direct Manager or Team Leader. In the unlikely event that the source person is infectious, a specialist will be consulted immediately and you will be contacted. Should you require the Employee Assistance Programme (counselling service) please telephone OCP on 0800 377 990.

This is a free service for all Pegasus Health employees.

You may require further testing after three months and your Manager or Team Leader will follow this up with you.

## Keep others safe

If the source person is infectious, you will want to avoid the possibility of passing infection on to anyone else during the follow-up period (three months).

These are general guidelines for avoiding transmission of blood borne viruses:

- Do not donate blood, plasma, body tissue, breast milk or sperm.
- Protect sexual partners by abstaining from sexual activity or by adopting safe sexual practices (use of condoms, etc).
- Seek expert medical advice regarding pregnancy and/or breastfeeding.
- Do not share any injecting equipment if involved in injecting drug use.
- If you develop acute hepatitis or unexplained illness with fever, enlarge lymph nodes or a rash, then you should be referred to a specialist.

# Blood or body fluid exposure

## Information for the employee

## What you need to do and why

**24 Hour Surgery  
401 Madras Street**

**Urgent medical and accident care 24/7**

[24hoursurgery.co.nz](http://24hoursurgery.co.nz)

Phone: 365-7777

