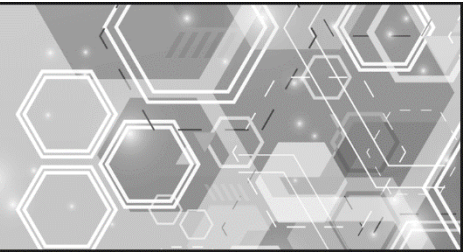




## Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



# **Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids**

## **What is it?**

Body fluids including blood, semen, vaginal fluid, spinal cord fluid, body tissues and organs may contain pathogens such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) that can cause an infection when it enters the body. 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 can carry hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV if blood is present. For more detail information for each of the diseases, see [Facts About... - Region of Durham](#).

## **What is an exposure?**

- Needle stick or sharps injury
- Sharing needles, syringes, or drug equipment
- Blood or body fluid contact with cuts or broken skin (healthy skin will not spread infections and acts as a barrier to the infection)
- Blood or body fluids contact with eyes, nose or mouth
- Sexual contact where body fluids are shared

## **What to do if I am exposed?**

- Wash the exposed skin surface with soap and water. If the area is bleeding, allow it to bleed freely. After cleaning, cover the wound with a clean dressing or bandage.
- If there has been an exposure to the eyes, nose or mouth, flush the area thoroughly with water.
- Go to the nearest emergency department **as soon as possible** after the exposure. The doctor will assess your risk of exposure to an infection. You may receive some blood tests to help determine if you need any special treatment.
- If you are an emergency service worker, you should also follow up with your Designated Officer.

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If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



## How is it treated?

Hepatitis B vaccination and/or immune globulin may be an option to give your body immunity and prevent infection. If you have been vaccinated for hepatitis B in the past, you may already be protected. A blood test can show if you are immune to the disease.

There are medications that help to prevent the HIV virus from infecting you. The medication has a risk of side effects and is meant to be taken after high-risk exposures. If recommended by a doctor, the treatment should start **as soon as possible** after an exposure – within 72 hours.

There is new treatment that can cure hepatitis C in most people. Follow up with a health care provider as soon as possible if you know you have been exposed.

## How can I protect myself?

- Hepatitis B is best prevented by vaccination.
- Follow up with routine prenatal screening for each pregnancy so that newborns can receive appropriate vaccination if required.
- Always practice safer sex, including using condoms.
- Never share needles and avoid sharing personal items such as razors and toothbrushes.
- Carefully investigate personal body services (e.g., tattooing, body piercing, nail services) to make sure they meet infection control recommendations (e.g., Know Before You Go Durham).
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent contact with other people's blood and body fluids (e.g., gloves, eyewear), and wash your hands after removing them.
- All blood spills (including if already dried) should be cleaned and disinfected with a mixture of bleach and water (one part household bleach to 10 parts water). Gloves should always be used when cleaning up any blood spills.
- If you are a health care worker or an emergency service worker, risk assessment followed by the implementation of routine practices to reduce or remove risk should be used in your daily practice.
- Always clean and disinfect or sterilize instruments and equipment between clients to reduce the possibility of transmitting blood-borne diseases.

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