

Accidental Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids

It is best to assume that all blood and body fluids are infectious.

You are at risk of getting an infection when:

- You have been pricked with a used or dirty needle.
- You have an open cut or scrape that has been in contact with another person's blood or body fluids.
- You had another person's blood or saliva splashed or sprayed in your eye, nose, or mouth.
- You have been bitten or scratched by another person and the skin has been broken.

Blood and body fluids might contain viruses or bacteria.

These could cause the following infections:

Tetanus: You might need a Tetanus vaccine if you have not had one in the last 10 years.

Hepatitis B: Hepatitis B infection can be prevented. If your work or lifestyle exposes you to the virus, we encourage you to get a Hepatitis B vaccine.

If you have not had Hepatitis B vaccine, you can begin your Hepatitis B vaccine series immediately after being exposed.

Hepatitis C: There is no vaccine to prevent Hepatitis C. If exposed, you must be tested regularly to make sure you have not been infected.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV): If the doctor suspects exposure to HIV, you will be advised to start drug treatment.

It is best to start this treatment within the first 2 hours of being exposed. This drug treatment usually lasts for 28 days.

How should I protect my family, others, and myself after an exposure?

If your exposure puts you at risk for infection, the doctor might tell you to take the following precautions:

- Do** use latex condoms (with a spermicide) during sexual activity.
- Do** cover any cuts or scratches.
- Do** tell your dentist at your next visit about the exposure.
- Do not** share personal items like your **toothbrush** or razor.
- Do not** donate blood, organs, or semen.
- Do not** breast feed.

Note: This pamphlet does not address exposure from unprotected sex.

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

Accidental Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids - *continued*

General tips to prevent exposure

- Wash your hands with soap and water often.
- Always cover open sores with a bandage.
- If you find a used needle or condom, never touch it with your hands.

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your local health unit
- Your family doctor
- HealthLinkBC - Call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at www.HealthLinkBC.ca

What to do if you are exposed

1

Do first aid right away.

For Skin Exposure/Needle Poke:

- Wash really well with soap and water for 3 to 5 minutes.

For Eye, Nose, or Mouth Exposure:

- Rinse well with water.

2

Go to an Emergency Department within 2 hours of being exposed.

- Explain what happened in detail.
- See an Emergency doctor who will assess your injury.
- Have blood tests, if needed
- Receive treatment, if it is needed.
- Follow-up with family doctor for testing to make sure the risk of infection is gone.

Adapted from 'BA.100.AC25 Accidental Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids' (June 2005) with permission from Vancouver Coastal Health.