

Blood-borne Diseases

What are blood-borne diseases?

Diseases such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) are spread by exposure to infected blood or bodily fluids, such as semen, vaginal secretions and in some cases, saliva.

You do not have to see blood or bodily fluids on instruments for an infection to occur.

Facts on blood-borne diseases:

- Hepatitis B virus can survive on surfaces such as metal, cotton, glass, etc. for 1-2 weeks.
- Someone infected with Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, or HIV may **not** show symptoms of illness right away but are still infectious.
- There **is** a vaccine that will protect you from getting Hepatitis B.
- There are **no** vaccines to protect you from getting Hepatitis C or HIV.
- Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C affect the liver, while HIV affects the body's immune system.
- Hepatitis B is more infectious than HIV.

How are they spread?

If a person has an infectious disease, it can spread by:

- Sharing dirty instruments or equipment carrying infected blood or bodily fluids.
- Improper cleaning and disinfection or sterilization of instruments/equipment after each client.
- Reusing single-use items, such as needles or blades.
- Worker pokes him/herself with a used needle or sharp instrument.
- When blood or bodily fluids come in contact with cuts or breaks in the skin. Healthy skin will not spread infections and acts as a barrier to the infection.
- When infected fluids get in your eyes, nose, or mouth.

How can I protect myself and my clients?

- Thoroughly wash hands before and after each client using liquid soap and warm water.
- For invasive procedures, single-use, disposable gloves must be worn for each client and discarded after each client. Wash hands before and after using gloves.
- Single-use, disposable sterile sharps must be used and properly discarded.
- Clean and then disinfect contaminated instruments and surfaces using an appropriate disinfectant as soon as possible. Sterilization may be required for certain items.

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Durham Health Connection Line

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729
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This information is available in accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.
Source: Guide to Infection Prevention and Control in Personal Service Settings, Public Health Ontario, July 2019.

- Items that penetrate the skin (i.e., needles/needle cartridges, lancets, etc.) must be sterile and immediately discarded after use.
- Items that hold sterile items, must be cleaned and high level disinfected or sterilized (as appropriate) after each client.
- Get vaccinated against Hepatitis B. Ask your doctor for more information about the vaccine.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, gown, and eye protection to prevent contact with other people's blood and bodily fluids.
- All blood spills (including if already dried) should be cleaned, then disinfected with a mixture of bleach and water (1 part bleach to 10 parts water).

What to do if there is an exposure?

1. Wear single-use gloves prior to handling or dressing the wound.
2. Wash the exposed skin surface with water and soap. If the area is bleeding, allow it to bleed freely. After cleaning the wound, apply a skin antiseptic and cover with a clean dressing or bandage.
3. If there has been a splash onto a mucous membrane (eyes, nose, mouth), flush the area thoroughly with water.
4. The best action to take is to go to 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.
5. Document all incidents and keep records on site for 1 year, then on file for 2 more years.
6. Clean all contaminated equipment/surfaces and rinse thoroughly. Disinfect equipment using the appropriate level of disinfection (refer to the *Cleaning, Disinfection & Sterilization Flowchart* and *Preparing Household Bleach as a Disinfectant* posters for more information).

What information needs to be documented when there has been an exposure?

- **Date** of exposure to blood or bodily fluids.
- **Service** being provided when the exposure occurred.
- **Part of the body** that was exposed to blood or bodily fluid.
- **Person providing the procedure** when the exposure occurred (i.e., first and last name, mailing address and phone number).
- **Action taken** by the person providing the procedure in response to the exposure.
- **Person exposed** to blood or bodily fluids (i.e., first and last name, mailing address and phone number).



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