

What to do if you get a sharps injury or other injury where an exposure to a blood borne virus (Hep B, Hep C, HIV, etc.) could have occurred



PROMPT HEALTH ADVICE IS ESSENTIAL

- Inform your manager if possible or another colleague if they are not available.
- Go to or immediately contact to the Occupational Health Department
- If out of hours go to you nearest Accident and Emergency department or see your General Practitioner and inform Occupational Health at the earliest opportunity.

Immediate First Aid following a Sharps Injury

If exposure has occurred via puncture wound;

- Encourage free bleeding by squeezing
- DO NOT SUCK the wound
- Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water
- Cover the wound with a waterproof dressing

If exposure has occurred into the:

- eyes irrigate with water as soon as possible for several minutes
- mouth rinse the mouth out several times with water and spit it out, DO NOT SWALLOW THE WATER
- damaged skin rinse affected area with copious amounts running water

Record the source of contamination

Significant injuries are:

- A needlestick injury which has broken the skin
- An injury where any other sharp object contaminated with blood or *high /medium* risk body fluids breaks the skin.
- The splashing of blood or high / medium risk body fluids onto a mucous membrane or a break in the skin.
- Sustaining a bite where the surface of the skin is broken.

The risk from a sharp injury is increased if:

- The injury is a deep wound.
- There is visible blood on the device causing the injury.
- A hollow bore needle was used.
- The device was previously in the patient's vein or artery.
- The patient had end stage AIDS or is in the acute viraemic phase of illness when the viral counts are at their highest.

The above injuries require immediate attention

Insignificant injuries are:

- When a low and / or medium risk bodily fluid has been in contact with broken skin.

High risk bodily fluids are:

- Blood and all body fluids containing blood
- Amniotic fluid
- Vaginal secretions and semen
- Human breast milk

Medium risk bodily fluids are (however all fluids become high risk if blood stained):

- Cerebral spinal fluid
- Peritoneal Fluid
- Pleural Fluid
- Pericardial fluid
- Synovial fluid
- Saliva in association with dentistry
- Unfixed tissues and organs
- Exudates or other tissue fluid from burns or skin lesions

Low risk bodily fluids are (however all fluids become high risk if blood stained):

- Urine
- Vomit
- Saliva
- Faeces

Hepatitis B immunisation programme gives the best known protection against the Hepatitis B virus.

It is essential that Hepatitis B immunisation programme appointments are kept