



Student Exposures to Hepatitis and HIV – Urgent Steps Needed

Blood Borne Pathogens - Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV are often referred to as “blood borne pathogens” because these viruses can be present in a person’s blood, and can be transmitted to another person who is exposed to that blood. Hepatitis B and HIV can also be transmitted by other body fluids, and can spread through sexual contact.

Many OSU students participate in academic and other activities that pose a risk for blood borne pathogen exposures. This includes health professional students, student researchers, and health care volunteers. You can be exposed if you get a puncture wound from a used needle or instrument, if someone’s blood or fluid touches any cut or other broken skin that you have, or if you are splashed with blood or fluid in the eye, mouth, or other mucus membrane.

Prevention - Students with a high likelihood of exposure to blood should receive training from their instructors or supervisors regarding the proper protective measures needed to minimize their risks. A minimum amount of blood handling and transfer should be planned into the procedures. Safety needles and needle-less systems should be used. Personal protective equipment, such as gloves, eye protection, and gowns, should be used whenever blood contact is likely.

Vaccines - Students who could be exposed to blood or body fluids should consider vaccination against Hepatitis B, if they have not received that vaccine in the past. Hepatitis B vaccine is available at Student Health Services. After receiving the vaccine series, a blood test to confirm immunity is usually required.

At this time, there are no vaccines available for Hepatitis C or for HIV.

Immediately After an Exposure -

Exposure to another person’s blood requires prompt action.

1. Clean any wounds with soap and water, and thoroughly remove any blood left in contact with your skin. Blood splashed into your mouth or eyes should be flushed away with water. Change any clothing contaminated with blood.
2. Report your exposure immediately to your instructor or supervisor
3. Obtain the name and contact information of the person whose blood was involved (the source patient), if possible. In most settings, this will be part of the report you completed above. The source patient may need to be tested for HIV, Hepatitis B or C. A rapid HIV test can be performed within minutes on the source patient. If your source is known to be HIV+, then you will need to be evaluated urgently.
4. Determine when it is appropriate for you to obtain a medical evaluation. This depends on the health of your source patient, the results of testing on their blood and the degree of your exposure
5. Tests for hepatitis B & C can take several days for results, so it is important for you to stay in contact with your instructor or supervisor to get those results.

Post-Exposure Treatment and Follow-up –

HIV – medications are prescribed to reduce your chance of getting HIV after a known exposure to that virus. These medicines are best started as soon as possible after the exposure, preferably within a few hours. Periodic follow-up testing for at least 6 months is recommended

Hepatitis B – Your immunity should be checked if your source patient is positive.

Hepatitis C – There is no current treatment. Periodic follow-up testing for at least 6 months is recommended.

Our Services – Call 292-4321

Student Health Services is available to see students who have exposures, initiate testing and treatment, and provide other assistance as needed. Use local emergency services after hours.