

## Exposure to Infected Blood or Other Body Fluids

### What is the risk of infection from body fluids?

Communicable infections like hepatitis B, hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) can be spread to you if you come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids. Contact between infected blood/body fluids and healthy skin that has no cuts or wounds does not create a health risk.

You are at risk when blood or **visibly bloody** body fluids (such as saliva) come in contact with:

- damaged skin, cuts or wounds
- the mucous membranes of your eyes, nose or mouth

The level of risk depends on:

- the amount of blood/body fluids you come in contact with
- how deep your cut or wound is
- the type of infection (hepatitis B or C; HIV) the other person has

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

If you are exposed to body fluids from a source person who may be infected, **go immediately to the nearest hospital emergency department. Advise the triage staff that you have had a potential exposure to a communicable disease so that you can be triaged appropriately.** A doctor will assess your risk, do blood

tests and decide if you need to take any medication.

Medications called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) may reduce your risk of getting hepatitis B and HIV and must be taken as soon as possible after exposure (**NO LONGER THAN 72 hours** after exposure). If a doctor prescribes PEP medications, it is important that you take the medications as instructed, **OR THEY WILL NOT WORK.**

### How can I find out if the other person is infected?

If you are concerned that the source person has an infection, you can ask to have the person tested voluntarily for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. If the person was infected only recently, it may be too soon to detect it. For that reason, **a negative test result does not always mean the person is not infected.** Because of this, you need to have your own blood tested for infections. Your doctor can advise you about the tests and tell you when you should have them done.

### What if the other person refuses to be tested?

No matter what else happens, your first priority is to see a doctor immediately for assessment and treatment. Then, if the person you believe may have infected you has refused (or you think the person

will refuse) to be tested, you may use *The Testing of Body Fluids and Disclosure Act*. This provincial law allows you to apply for a court order to ensure the other person gets a blood test for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV.

### **Who can apply for a court order to get the testing done?**

You can apply for a court order to do testing if you have come into contact with blood or body fluids from another person as the result of:

- being the victim of crime
- providing emergency medical help as a good Samaritan (ex: helping out at the scene of an accident)

There are two types of court orders for testing: expedited or standard.

**Expedited** court orders for testing can be made by a Judicial Justice of the Peace (JJP). The application is made at a provincial court office, or if necessary, by telephone and fax.

If you make an application by telephone and fax, you must call the JJP co-ordinator at 204-945-1699, or toll free 1-866-748-7851, between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. to arrange for an application hearing.

You do not need to show a physician's report or medical assessment to receive the court order.

Orders are granted based on a risk assessment, which takes into account the type of body fluids and the type of contact.

If an order is granted, the applicant must arrange to have the order given to the person to be tested. The order will be invalid if not served within 21 days of

the date issued by the court. The order will also become invalid if the person to be tested objects formally to the court within 24 hours of being served. If the expedited order becomes invalid, you may still apply for a standard court order for testing.

You can find out if an objection to an expedited testing order has been registered by calling the JJP co-ordinator at the numbers listed above.

To apply for a **Standard** court order, you must do so through the Court of Queen's Bench and provide a physician's report. The physician's report must address:

- your need for a baseline test to determine whether there is a chance you could already be infected with one of the diseases
- whether the testing order would allow you to reduce the risk to your own health

If a standard court order for testing is granted, a copy of it for tracking purposes should be provided to Cadham Provincial Laboratory at:

750 William Avenue  
Winnipeg MB R3E 3J7  
**E-mail:** cadham@gov.mb.ca  
**Phone:** 204-945-6123

### **Where are the test results sent?**

The results of tests done under an order will be sent to a physician you designate. The physician will provide the results to you. If you do not designate a physician to receive the results, they will be sent to a Medical Officer of Health who will provide them to you.

**Note:** No matter what you choose to do about having the other person tested or getting a court order, your first move must be to go immediately to an emergency room for assessment and treatment. Advise the triage staff that you have had a potential exposure to a blood-borne communicable disease so that you can be triaged appropriately.

#### **For more information**

Talk to your doctor or contact Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 in Winnipeg; elsewhere in Manitoba, call toll free 1-888-315-9257.