

Prevention of Blood Borne Virus Infections

Hepatitis B.

HIV.

Hepatitis C.

The prevention of these infections depends upon effective health education aimed at the avoidance of contamination with blood and body secretions. The concept of universal precautions requires that everyone should be assumed to be infectious.

The first duties of people at risk of exposure to infection is to ensure their own safety by vaccinations, by use of protective clothing (latex gloves, gowns, eye protection etc.) appropriate to the task, and to dispose of waste safely. Safe work practices also include the avoidance of sharps whenever possible. The risk of injuries with contaminated needles is mainly associated with re-sheathing.

Those treating blood injuries, for instance on the sports field, should wear a new pair of latex rubber gloves for each casualty. Wounds should be cleaned with a fresh supply of water and single use of sponges or gauze squares.

Blood spills on impermeable surfaces – cover with a solution of hypochlorite 10,000 ppm and leave for two minutes. Wearing gloves, clear up with paper towels and dispose in clinical waste. Wash area with soap and water.

Needlestick injuries. Immediate action – make the wound bleed, if possible. Clean well with copious amounts of soap and running water. Apply occlusive dressing. Identify the source of the sharp.

Check with the needlestick injury policy kept in the school medical centre.

Record identity of the member of staff and the patient. Liaise with the local consultant in Communicable Diseases. If immunoglobulin is required, treatment is by the local accident and emergency unit and must be given within 48 hours to be of most benefit. An accident report should be completed.

MOSA encourages the promotion of immunisation against hepatitis B.

School nurses and cleaners working in school medical centres should be immunised against hepatitis B, and antibody titres checked 1-4 months after completion of primary course. Under Control of Substance Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations, individual workers have the right to know whether or not they have been protected. First aiders and games staff should be advised on immunisation. Hepatitis B immunisation should be offered to those travelling to areas of high risk. Pupils applying to medical school need to have their hepatitis B status checked according to the request from the university and immunisation given well before they leave school.

Health education about body piercing, tattooing and acupuncture should stress that these should only be carried out under sterile conditions, preferably with single use needles and instruments. People should not share toothbrushes or razors.

Casual and household contact is not associated with transmission of blood borne viruses.