

This can happen through:

- blood or blood product transfusions before 1990
- sharing needles or having procedures (getting a tattoo or piercing, acupuncture, or electrolysis) done with needles that aren't sterile
- sharing a straw to snort drugs
- sharing items like razors, nail clippers, scissors, or toothbrushes
- needle-stick injuries or being exposed to other contaminated items
- unprotected sex—risk is higher if you have multiple sex partners, or if you engage in anal sex and rough sex
- in rare cases, a mother with hepatitis C can spread the virus to her baby at birth

What are the symptoms?

People infected with hepatitis C may have no symptoms, mild symptoms, or flu-like symptoms. People may have symptoms like feeling tired, poor appetite, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, joint pain, dark-coloured urine, light-coloured stools, and the eyes and skin turning yellow.

If I'm exposed to hepatitis C, what's the risk of getting infected?

Each time you're exposed, your risk of infection increases. Your risk of infection per exposure through:

- shared needles is less than 1/50
- a needle-stick injury from a needle found in the community is very rare
- sexual contact is very small. The risk is higher if you have many sex partners
- Your risk of getting hepatitis C is higher if the contact is with someone who's also infected with HIV.

Can hepatitis C be prevented?

There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C.

Can hepatitis C be treated?

Yes.

Should I get tested?

Being tested for HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C is an important decision for your health. The sooner you know you're infected, the sooner you can get treatment and support.

You'll also learn how to prevent it from spreading to others. Many people who have these viruses have no symptoms. Even if you look and feel well, you can still spread infections to others.

If I've been exposed to a virus, what can I do to protect others?

Until your testing is completed:

- call your family doctor if you have symptoms
- don't share needles or equipment to inject drugs or steroids
- don't donate blood or bone marrow
- don't share personal items like toothbrushes, razors, or needles
- don't try to get pregnant—if you do get pregnant, call your family doctor right away
- wear gloves to clean up blood or body fluids and keep open wounds covered
- use a solution of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water to clean up blood or body fluids

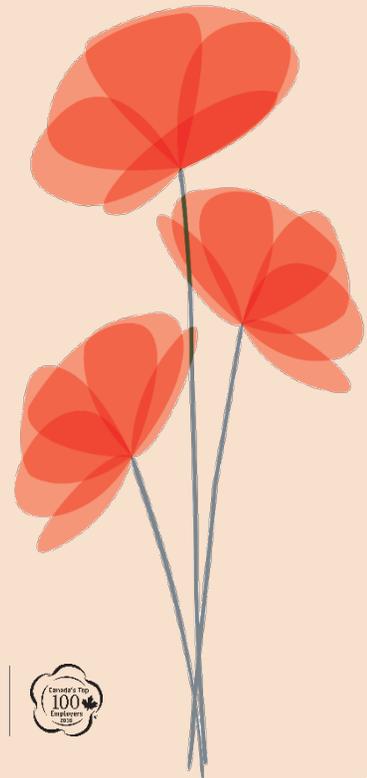
Whether you've been tested or not, always practice safer sex by using condoms.

➤ **For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811**

Or your local Public Health Contact listed below

Know the Facts

If you've been exposed to HIV, Hepatitis B, or Hepatitis C



What is HIV?

HIV is human immunodeficiency virus. It weakens the immune system, which normally protects the body from infections and cancers.

- HIV is a serious disease that is life threatening.
- There is no cure for HIV.
- There is no vaccine to prevent it.

If it's not treated, in time HIV can progress to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). AIDS weakens the immune system, putting people at a much higher risk of getting different types of illnesses and cancers.

How does HIV spread?

HIV can spread through contact with the body fluids (e.g., blood, semen, vaginal fluid, breast milk) of someone who's infected.

To get HIV, the body fluid of an infected person must enter the body through thin skin (e.g., mucous membranes, wounds). This can happen:

- during unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex
- when needles are shared
- through needle-stick injuries
- when babies are fed infected breast milk

What are the symptoms of HIV?

Some people infected with HIV live for years without symptoms. Others may get flu-like symptoms 2 to 4 weeks after being exposed. These symptoms may go away.

Symptoms of HIV include: weight loss, feeling tired, fever, night sweats, joint/muscle pain, rashes, diarrhea, vomiting, poor appetite, sore throat, swollen glands, and yeast infections.

If I'm exposed to HIV, what's the risk of getting infected?

Each time you're exposed to HIV, your risk of getting infected increases. The risk of getting infected per exposure is approximately:

- having sex – up to 1/3
- sharing needles - less than 1/100

- needle-stick injury (e.g., healthcare providers – less than 1/200)
- getting blood in your eyes or mouth – less than 1/1000
- getting HIV from needles found in the community is unlikely. There are no reported cases.

How can I prevent getting HIV?

- Use condoms when having sex
- Don't share needles
- Make sure that all procedures you are having (i.e. getting piercing or tattoos) are done with sterile needles
- if your partner is HIV positive encourage him/her to stay on treatment
- if you have sex and/or injection partners with HIV, talk with your doctor about HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver. It can cause serious liver problems including liver cancer or liver failure.

How does hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B can spread through contact with body fluids (e.g., blood, semen, vaginal fluids) from a person who's infected. To get hepatitis B, the body fluid of an infected person must enter the body through thin skin (e.g., mucous membranes, wounds). This can happen:

- during unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex
- when needles are shared
- through needle-stick injuries
- during childbirth if the mother is infected with hepatitis B
- when there's contact with infected blood or (body fluids with blood) like with a sports injury, helping someone bandage a cut, or cleaning up body fluids

What are the symptoms of hepatitis B?

Some people infected with hepatitis B have no symptoms at all, or experience only mild symptoms.

Some of the symptoms include: feeling tired, poor appetite, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, joint pain, dark coloured urine, light-coloured stools, and the eyes and skin turning yellow.

If I'm exposed to hepatitis B, what's the risk of getting infected?

Each time you're exposed, your risk of infection increases. Your risk of infection per exposure through:

- needle-stick injury is 1/3 to 2/3 (if you aren't immunized or treated)
- needle-stick injury from a needle found in the community is rare
- High-risk sex activities carry greater risk of spreading hepatitis B

Can hepatitis B be prevented?

The hepatitis B vaccine is the best way to prevent infection. For more information about getting immunized call Health Link at 811 or call a public health office in your area.

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a virus that affects the liver. In time it can lead to liver cancer and liver failure.

How does hepatitis C spread?

Hepatitis C can spread through contact with body fluids (e.g., blood, semen, vaginal fluids) from a person who is infected.

While some people never find out how they got infected, it is usually spread through contact with blood containing the virus.