

HEALTH ISSUES

Aims

To provide an understanding of the general principles and practices of universal or standard precautions of infection control to create healthier and safer homes and work places and to also provide a broad basic knowledge of duty of care and the legal implications if duty of care is breached.



HEALTH ISSUES

Objectives

By the end of the session you should be able to:

1. Identify a range of possible health risk issues that may present whilst working with the department
2. Describe the modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases
3. Identifying the possible signs of infection; and
4. Identify strategies to minimize risks in the workplace.

What is AIDS ?

AIDS is Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

- You DO NOT die from AIDS.
- You die from conditions that you develop due to your immune system being damaged.

What is HIV ?

HIV or Human Immunodeficiency Virus is a virus

- HIV means the person is infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- HIV is not AIDS

HIV Transmission

- HIV is transmitted by the exchange of bodily fluids with an infected (seropositive) person
- Transmission may occur when blood, semen or vaginal fluids get into the body of the uninfected person
- This can happen through unsafe sex – rectal, oral and vaginal – and through sharing needles and injecting equipment contaminated with blood
- From mother to baby if the mother is HIV positive during pregnancy / during (a vaginal) birth / when breast feeding
- Through donated blood and blood products. However all blood, organs, tissues and semen donated in Australia is screened for HIV. The risk of getting HIV from these products in Australia is low.
- It is extremely rare for HIV to be transmitted orally.

Bodily fluids known to cause transmission are:

- Blood
- Semen
- Vaginal fluid including menstrual blood
- Cerebrospinal, amniotic, synovial, pericardial and peritoneal fluids

HIV is not transmitted by these fluids unless they are visibly contaminated by blood

- Saliva and sputum
- Urine, Faeces and Vomit
- Sweat, tears and nasal secretions

How HIV is Not Spread

- Kissing and hugging
- Swimming pools
- Sharing crockery and cutlery
- Toilet seats
- Every day social contact
- Shaking hands
- Mosquitoes
- Masturbation

How do we Protect ?

- Safer sexual practices
- Not sharing needles
- Cover broken skin with water proof dressings
- Use gloves to clean up blood or bodily fluids
- Avoid multiple sexual partners

How can you test for HIV?

1. A blood test is the only way of detecting HIV. Most people with HIV look and feel well for years and they may not even know they are infected.
2. Using current medical equipment, it can take up to 3 months before evidence of HIV infection can be detected. This is called the window period and means that during this time you always practice safe sex and use a barrier when in contact with blood or bodily fluids.

How is HIV / AIDS treated?

- Currently there is no cure for HIV and AIDS
- There is no vaccine to prevent infection
- There are antiviral treatments which keep the virus under control for long periods of time
- For those who are HIV positive the outlook is constantly improving

HEPATITIS A

- Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver
- Hepatitis A is caused by a particular virus which infects the liver
- Hepatitis A is spread by the faecal – oral route

The early signs of infection

The early signes of infection include:

- General aches and pains
- Fever and sweats
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Lack of appetite leading to weight loss
- Pain in the abdomen

Three to ten days later signs might include:

- Urine may become dark in colour; and
- Faeces can be pale coloured

Early signs of infection (continued)

- Many of these symptoms may be caused by other reasons. They are not always caused by hepatitis A.
- It usually takes about 4 weeks from contact with the virus until early signs of infection appear.
- Most people are completely well again within three months. Some people can feel tired and have poor energy levels for some months. There are no long-term effects as a result of hepatitis A infection.

HEPATITIS A Prevention ?

1. Being Vaccinated against Hepatitis A (available from your GP) is the best defense.
2. A course of two or three vaccinations is needed for total protection, given over six or twelve months. One injection is not enough.
3. Treat every one as if they have a communicable disease and treat all bodily fluids as if they are infectious.

Hygiene

1. Wash your hands – especially after going to the toilet, touching soiled linen and before eating.
2. Ensure cooking utensils and linen are washed in hot soapy water.
3. Toys shared by children should be thoroughly cleaned.
4. Avoid sharing drink and eating utensils.
5. Avoid sharing cigarettes and smoking equipment.

HEPATITIS B

- Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver
- Hepatitis B is caused by a particular virus which infects the liver
- Hepatitis B is spread through exposure to blood and bodily fluids

Modes of Spread

- Unprotected sex
- Sharing needles
- Mother to baby at birth and during breast feeding
- Tattooing and body piercing
- Sharing razors and tooth brushes

Early signs of infection

Early signs of infection include:

1. Pain in the abdomen
2. Nausea and vomiting
3. Weakness, tiredness
4. Loss of appetite
5. Fever
6. General aches and pains

This may be followed by:

1. Urine may become darker; and
2. faeces may become pale coloured

HEPATITIS B Protection

1. Get Vaccinated at the centre or your own GP
2. 80 - 95 % efficiency

HEPATITIS C

- Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver
- Hepatitis C is caused by a particular virus which infects the liver
- Hepatitis C is spread through exposure to blood and bodily fluids

How do we get Hepatitis C?

You can get hepatitis C through:

1. Re-using or sharing needles or any equipment when injecting drugs.
2. Having received a blood transfusion with infected blood before 1990.
3. Sharing personal hygiene equipment, such as razors or toothbrushes

HEPATITIS C Protection

- There are no vaccinations available
- Always place a barrier between yourself and any blood

Hepatitis C is not transmitted through:

- Kissing, sneezing, coughing, hugging or other social contacts
- Sharing food or drinks
- Sharing eating or cooking utensils
- Toilet or shower facilities, or
- Mosquito or other blood sucking insects.

How would you know if you had Hepatitis C?

- It usually takes one to two months after contact with hepatitis C for infection to develop although it can take longer. This time is called the incubation period.
- Hepatitis C is usually a long term (chronic) illness and often there are no symptoms. Only a small number of people experience short-term (acute) illness with Hepatitis C.

Possible symptoms related to Hepatitis C

Symptoms that might be experienced with acute hepatitis C include:

- Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice) and dark orange or tea coloured urine
- Nausea
- Tiredness
- Swollen and painful liver (which is on the right-hand side of abdomen).

Hepatitis Tests and Treatment.

- Having hepatitis C antibody blood test is the only way to tell if you are infected with the hepatitis C virus. Blood tests can also show if there is any damage to your liver.
- Your doctor will monitor your health in relation to your hepatitis C. They may suggest at some stage you undergo treatment. Treatment outcomes for people with hepatitis C are encouraging.

Universal (Standard) Precautions

- Always protect yourself FIRST
- Always put a barrier between you and any bodily fluids
- DO NOT assume someone doesn't have an infectious or communicable disease

Cleaning of contaminated areas

- Use protective clothing such as gloves and if the situation warrants it, overalls
- Use paper towels to clean up small spills
- Use disinfectants to clean the areas
- Use the appropriate waste bags
- Launder reusable items

Universal Precautions

Child Safety Staff Safety

Home Visits and Needle Stick Injury

CARDINAL RULES

- **Never** recap needles
- **Avoid** removing your shoes
- **Avoid** sitting on soft surfaces like lounges, use hard timber chairs where possible.

NEEDLE MANAGEMENT

- **Request** the user manages the needle.
- **Suggest** using a milo or baby formula tin as a makeshift sharps container for a short-term solution.

IF THREATENED WITH A NEEDLE

- **Assume** it is contaminated.
- **Do not** attempt to disarm. Remove yourself from the area and seek police assistance.

What to do if a Needle Stick Injury Occurs

1. Bleed it
2. Wash it with soap and water
3. Cover it
4. Seek advice from Health Services Practitioners

Points to Remember

Put a barrier between yourself and bodily fluids, especially blood

- Use Universal (Standard) Precautions
- Hepatitis is far more prevalent
- Immunise against Hepatitis B
- Treat all people as if they have a communicable disease

Notes for Carers

Organise change areas with the following items:

- Gloves and nappy bags
- A sealable nappy bin
- Bleach to clean up bodily fluid spills and kill viruses
- Antibacterial hand wash

Out and about

- Seek behaviour support for spitting or biting child
- Infected children can play and socialise normally with others
- You should carry gloves, nappy sacks, bleach etc when you are out and about
- Protect the child's privacy at all times

Protecting yourself and your family

- All those having regular contact with the child should consider relevant vaccinations
- Normalise family life by developing safe practices and contingency plans
- Review plans regularly to avoid complacency. One contamination is enough to infect

If Contamination Occurs

- Bleed the transfer point
- Wash it with soapy water
- Cover it
- Seek medical assistance
- Report it to your Child Safety Officer

Who can help?

- Community Health
- Queensland Health Child Protection Liaison Officer (CPLO)