

NEEDLESTICK INJURY – PATIENT FACT SHEET COVID-19 VACCINATION SITES

PATIENT AS THE INJURED PERSON

What is a needlestick injury?

A needlestick or sharps injury is when your skin is penetrated by a needle or other sharp object (such as a syringe, scalpel or broken glass) that has been in contact with blood or other body fluids. Action must be taken immediately if such injuries occur.

Needlestick injuries put the injured person at risk of infection from blood borne viruses such as HIV, Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and Hepatitis C virus (HCV). It is very important that these injuries are reported and investigated correctly.

What happens in the event of a Needlestick injury?

If you have been exposed to a staff member's blood or other body fluid there is a risk that if they are carrying one of the above mentioned viruses, you could contract an infection. The staff member will be asked to give consent for their blood to be taken to test for the presence of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. You will also be asked for your consent for your blood to be taken to test for the presence of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV.

It is important to establish as soon as possible whether or not the staff member is carrying one of the viruses, as we may be able to offer you treatment to prevent you from becoming infected.

The medical team will explain when and how you will get the results of the blood tests and explain any consequences to you. It is suggested that you read the information given below about these viruses and contact your GP if you have any questions or points you may like clarified.

Information

Hepatitis B is a virus which can cause liver inflammation. Once infected, individuals may or may not become noticeably ill and many can fight off the virus and become non-infectious. Some people may carry the virus for the rest of their lives and remain a possible source of infection to other people that are exposed to their blood or body fluid.

Hepatitis C is a virus which can cause liver inflammation. It is carried in the blood but is less likely to be carried in other body fluids. Individuals may not be aware that they have been infected and can carry the virus for the rest of their life. It is difficult to be certain which infected people are contagious and so everyone with evidence of past infection must be treated as though they are a potential source of infection to others. If positive you will require some medical advice concerning your follow-up.

HIV is a virus mostly found in blood but also in other body fluids. Infected individuals may not develop significant illness for many years but are still a source of infection to others exposed to their blood or body fluid. If positive you will require medical follow up and counselling about the way this will affect your life.