

# Sharps and splash injuries

Information and advice for patients

## *Occupational Health & Wellbeing*

A member of staff has been exposed to your blood or other body fluids through a sharps or splash injury. We would like to test you for certain infections in order to see whether it is possible for an infection to have been passed onto the member of staff.

It is important to note that you are not at any risk of getting an infection as a result of this injury. You have not been singled out; it is hospital policy to approach all patients in this situation and your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

### **What are sharps and splash injuries?**

A sharps injury occurs when a member of staff is accidentally stabbed by a sharp instrument (such as a needle) that may have had contact with blood or other body fluids from a patient.

A splash injury is when body fluids have splashed into an open cut, wound or membrane (such as the eye) from a patient to a member of staff.

### **What will happen next?**

We would like to ask you some personal questions and test your blood for certain infections such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV; we will only do these tests with your consent. If you have any questions about these infections, please contact your GP.

You are asked to have the tests even if you do not have any symptoms of the viruses because people can have these viruses for many years without experiencing any symptoms. This information will help us to decide whether the member of staff requires treatment or not.

### **What are the benefits of the blood test?**

The benefit of the test is that, if any of your results are positive, it will allow you and the member of staff who has had the sharps or splash injury to access the appropriate treatment at an early stage.

### **What are the risks of the blood test?**

The main risk of having a blood test is quite minor as whilst having the blood test, you may experience some discomfort or bruising at the site where the needle goes in but this usually goes away shortly after the test.

### **Are there any alternative tests?**

There are no alternative tests.

### **What are the risks of not having the test?**

You have the right to refuse the blood test and to answering the personal questions relating to this incident. If you do not have the test there is a risk that you could have undiagnosed

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Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV and have passed this to the health care worker (as well as any sexual partners or unborn children) and could delay treatment being given.

In addition to this, if you do not have the test, the injured health care worker will need to have further screening to determine whether they have contracted a virus.

### **How do I get the results?**

We will inform you of the results as soon as they are ready and will arrange the appropriate follow-up for the member of staff. Your results will be kept confidential and will only be shared with your consent with those involved in your care.

If your test results are positive for any of the infections, all necessary arrangements for treatment will be made.

### **Contact Details**

#### **Occupational Health & Wellbeing Service**

Telephone: 0121 507 3306

Monday – Friday between  
8.30am – 4.30pm

### **Further information**

If you have any questions or concerns about the issues raised in this leaflet please discuss these with your doctor. You can also visit the Health Protection Agency website:

#### **Health Protection Agency**

[www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk) and [www.swbhengage.com](http://www.swbhengage.com), follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

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### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Health Protection Agency, 'Eye of the needle', November 2008
- Department of Health, 'HIV post-exposure prophylaxis: Guidance from the UK Chief Medical Officers' Expert Advisory Group on AIDS', September 2008
- Royal College of Physicians, 'Testing for HIV', October 2009
- NHS Employers, 'Protecting healthcare workers from sharps injuries', May 2013

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5495 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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