

# Blood Borne Viruses

**Hepatitis B,  
Hepatitis C  
and HIV.**

**What you need  
to know...**

## What are Blood Borne Viruses?

Blood Borne Viruses (BBVs) are viruses that are passed from an infected person to others in blood or other body fluids.

Many people do not have any symptoms and so do not know they are infected. They can therefore unknowingly pass infection onto others.

### Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver and can lead to long-term liver damage (cirrhosis and liver cancer) if left untreated. There is a vaccine to protect against Hepatitis B. Treatments are available through specialist clinics.

### Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a virus that affects the liver and can lead to long-term liver damage (cirrhosis and liver cancer) if left untreated. There is no vaccine, but a short course of treatment that can clear the virus is available.

### HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system and destroys its defences against infection and disease. There is no vaccine, but treatment is usually just one tablet a day. Effective treatments mean that people living with HIV can live a normal lifespan.

When someone with HIV is on effective treatment it means that they can't pass the virus on to others.

**This is known as U=U  
(Undetectable= Untransmittable)**

## How are BBVs passed on?

- Unprotected sex (sex without a condom).
- Sharing needles or other drug injecting equipment.
- Skin puncture by blood contaminated sharp instruments such as needlestick injury, tattoo or body piercing.
- Receiving medical /dental treatment or blood products overseas.
- Exposure to blood from, for example, splash to open cut, penetrating human bite, sharing razors or toothbrushes.
- An infected mother to her child, usually during delivery or breastfeeding.
- In blood transfusion or blood products given to patients before 1991.

You **DO NOT** get BBVs from shaking hands, kissing, cuddling, coughing or sneezing, or from sharing cups, cutlery or toilet seats

## How can I avoid getting a BBV?

- Use a condom when having sex.
- Never share needles, syringes, water or any other paraphernalia if you use or inject drugs. Use fresh, clean equipment every time you inject, snort or smoke.
- Go to a licensed practitioner if you are getting a tattoo, piercing or any other procedure involving skin puncture.
- Keep cuts and wounds clean and covered with a waterproof dressing.
- Wear rubber gloves to clean up blood spills.
- Never share toothbrushes or razors.

## Hepatitis B Vaccine

There is a vaccine for Hepatitis B which can prevent you from becoming infected with the virus. The Hepatitis B vaccine is free if you are considered to be at risk of contracting Hepatitis B.

If you are at risk of Hepatitis B you can ask your GP to refer you for a vaccine or ask at your local sexual health services.

If you need a vaccine due to the nature of your job your occupational health provider may be responsible for paying for your vaccination.

All babies born in the UK on or after 1st August 2017 are offered the Hepatitis B vaccine as part of their routine childhood vaccination schedule.

## Pre-exposure Prophylaxis for HIV (PrEP)

- PrEP is medication that can stop the person taking it from getting HIV.
- PrEP is for HIV negative people who are at high risk of getting HIV.
- You can get PrEP from your local sexual health clinic - call: **0345 337 9900** for information and appointments
- For more information about PrEP visit: [www.nhsinform.scot/hiv-prep-pre-exposure-prophylaxis](http://www.nhsinform.scot/hiv-prep-pre-exposure-prophylaxis)

## Post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV (PEP)

PEP is a course of medication which can be used to reduce the risk of getting HIV following exposure. To work, PEP must be taken within 72 hours (three days) of the exposure to HIV, and ideally should be taken within 24 hours.

If you think you have been at risk you should seek urgent medical advice from your GP, local A&E or sexual health service.

## Should I get tested for BBVs?

If you think you have been at risk you should get tested. It's better to know so you can get treatment and avoid becoming ill - **Remember that BBVs often don't have any symptoms until the disease has progressed.**



## You should have a Blood Borne Virus test if you have **EVER**:

- Had unprotected sex.
- Injected drugs, even if it was a long time ago or only once.
- Had a tattoo or piercing in conditions that were not sterile.
- Had medical treatment abroad.
- Received a blood transfusion or blood products before 1991.





## How do they test for BBVs?

The only way to know if you have a BBV is to get a blood test. A small amount of blood is taken from your arm, or a pin prick from your finger if a dry blood spot test is used.



## Where can I get tested?

- Your GP
- Grampian Sexual Health Services  
Call: **0345 337 9900** or visit:  
**[www.grampiansexualhealthservices.com](http://www.grampiansexualhealthservices.com)**

Some other services in Grampian offer testing - for example some drug and alcohol services and needle exchanges. Please discuss with the service.

- **Postal testing**

Order a postal test to be sent to your home.

**email: [gram.bbvpostaltesting@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.bbvpostaltesting@nhs.scot)**  
**or call Healthline on 08085 202030**



## Free condoms

Free condoms and lube are available from many outlets in Grampian including pharmacies, sexual health clinics and drug and alcohol services or order online by emailing: **gram.freecondoms@nhs.scot** or call the Healthline on: **08085 202030**

## Injecting equipment providers

A list of all injecting equipment providers in Grampian is available at:

**<https://www.nhsgrampian.org/currentneedleexchanges>**

Scan Me >



## Your rights

In Scotland, treatment for blood borne viruses is free whatever your immigration status. In the UK The Equality Act 2010 protects people living with HIV from discrimination.

Taking a test will not affect current or future life insurance policies, but a positive result may need to be declared.



## For more information and support

- Speak to your GP or local pharmacist.
- NHS Grampian Liver Nurses - Call: **01224 554757** (Monday - Friday 9-5) or email: **gram.livernurses@nhs.scot**
- **www.grampiansexualhealthservices.com**  
- Sexual Health Service website for information and to book an appointment.
- NHS Grampian Health Protection Team  
- **01224 558520**
- **gram.freecondoms@nhs.scot** - email address to order condoms.
- **www.ourpositivevoice.org** - Local HIV patient Forum offering peer support and advice about living with HIV in Grampian.
- **www.hepatitisscotland.org.uk**  
- Information about Hepatitis in Scotland.
- **www.nhsinform.scot** - NHS Inform.

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