


hepatitis B, hepatitis C, AIDS



A person has been exposed to your blood.

● What DOES THAT MEAN?

It means that a person has been in contact with your blood (or other potentially contaminated body fluid) and may have contracted an infection as a result of that contact. Such exposure can happen to persons who prick themselves with a needle or another instrument used to give you care or who are spattered with blood when someone hemorrhages or undergoes a procedure that induces bleeding.

● What DOES IT MEAN FOR THE PERSON WHO HAS BEEN EXPOSED?

The principal blood-borne infections are hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), which causes AIDS.

Proven preventive measures can be recommended if the risk of transmitting the hepatitis B or HIV virus cannot be ruled out. Vaccinations are sometimes administered to exposed persons to prevent hepatitis B infection, while powerful drugs can be prescribed for a four-week period to prevent HIV infection. However, the potential side effects associated with this treatment are not to be taken lightly.

If you cannot be discounted as a carrier of the hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV virus, the exposed person will need blood tests periodically over a six-month period to ensure that he or she did not contract an infection.

Throughout this period, the exposed person must take certain measures to avoid transmitting a possible infection. These include taking steps not to become pregnant, using a condom and refraining from giving blood.

On the other hand, if it can be confirmed that none of these viruses is present in your blood, the exposed person has nothing to fear and can avoid undergoing treatment or extended medical follow-up.

It is therefore very important to determine whether your blood contains the hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV virus if someone has been in contact with it.

● What DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU?

A health professional will ask for your consent to carry out blood tests to determine whether the hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV virus is present in your blood. You are completely free to accept or refuse the tests, and you are entitled to receive all the information necessary to make your decision.

Your test results are confidential, like all information in your medical file. However, the exposed person will be indirectly informed of the results since they are the basis for determining the appropriate medical follow-up.

Blood tests are the only reliable means of determining whether your blood contains the hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV virus.

The hepatitis B and HIV viruses are generally transmitted by sexual contact or through infected blood, while the hepatitis C virus is mostly a blood-borne infection. The chance of transmitting these infections can be increased by certain sexual practices, blood transfusions received before screening became mandatory, injection-drug use and the presence of a sexually-transmitted disease (STD).

To gauge the possibility of one of these viruses being present in your blood, a health professional may ask you certain questions on the above subjects and on any symptoms you may have that are sometimes related to these infections (such as jaundice, weight loss and pronounced fatigue).

If you show no symptoms or signs of the infections, it does not necessarily mean that you are not infected with one or the other of the viruses, as infected persons are often not noticeably sick. At-risk behaviour, whether it can be ascribed to

you or not, is useful only as a means of identifying the nature of the risk, not as a way of confirming the presence or absence of an infection.

● Are there DISADVANTAGES TO UNDERGOING THE TESTS?

The tests themselves simply involve taking a sample of your blood. However, you have to consider the possibility that you will find out you are carrying an infection you did not know you had. That can be a difficult situation, particularly when unexpected. Talk it over with a health professional. Together, you can assess the likelihood of a positive result on one of the tests and what it would mean for you.

hepatitis B

hepatitis C

AIDS

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AIDS



ACCIDENTAL EXPOSURE TO BLOOD OR OTHER BODY FLUIDS POTENTIALLY CONTAMINATED

- by the hepatitis B VIRUS
- the hepatitis C VIRUS
- or the AIDS VIRUS

● **Are there ADVANTAGES FOR YOU IN UNDERGOING THE TESTS?**

It is true that the tests are aimed first and foremost at facilitating the follow-up of the person who was exposed to your blood. However, should you turn out to have an infection that you were unaware of, in certain cases early detection:

- gives you access to treatments that can limit complications;
- enables you to take steps to avoid transmitting the infection to those close to you.

● **If you AGREE TO THE TESTS:**

- Do not hesitate to ask questions about the types of tests that will be done, their significance, how the results will be used and confidentiality measures.
- Establish right away the manner in which the results are to be communicated to YOU. You can have the results sent to your attending physician, who would then communicate them

to you during a scheduled appointment, or you can set up an appointment at the health institution that assessed the exposure of the person who was in contact with your blood (or other potentially contaminated body fluid). In any case, the results should be communicated to you in person rather than over the phone.

- Remember that you are under no obligation to have blood tests done.

● **If you decide NOT TO GO THROUGH WITH THE TESTS:**

- It is your choice and must be respected. However, be sure to ask questions about any fears that might be influencing your decision, as there may be no grounds for them.
- Although less reliable than blood-test results, certain information on your medical history or lifestyle can be useful in guiding the health professional responsible for assessing the risk related to exposure. Any information you provide is confidential.

Your cooperation is invaluable. It can ensure that the person exposed to your blood does not needlessly undergo tests or extended treatment.

- For further information, consult the Info-Santé service of your CLSC or your attending physician.

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● **INFORMATION FOR THE SOURCE INDIVIDUAL**

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