

Why should I have a test for blood borne viruses?

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients of NHS Tayside during whose care, blood or body fluids have been involved in an injury sustained by a member of staff.

What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet will help patients understand why they are being asked to have a test for HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C

What has happened?

NHS staff often have to handle all types of body fluids and materials as well as sharp instruments. Occasionally injuries can occur – for example after taking blood the needle can accidentally puncture the member of staff's skin. Or blood could splash in someone's eye during an operation. These injuries are not your fault and this process is not intended to cause you any distress.

What is the problem?

In very exceptional circumstances the member of staff could become infected by a virus that the patient may knowingly or unknowingly have. There is treatment that the member of staff could take to prevent HIV however the medicine could also be harmful to them.

What happens next?

A staff member will speak to you to ask you some questions about whether you are likely to have an infection like hepatitis or HIV. Some of these questions are very personal but please don't be offended – everyone in this situation will be asked these. If any particular risk for infection is identified then the injured staff member will start to take medicines to prevent HIV.

So why should I have an HIV test?

- If you are found not to have the virus (the test is **negative**), the injured staff member can stop taking the medicines.
- If you **choose not to have the test** then the injured staff member will continue on this treatment for 28 days. This may result in side-effects or complications as well as sick-leave.
- If your test is **positive** then it is good to know about it as soon as possible. You will have access to support and to treatment. People with HIV can now be expected to enjoy a near normal life expectancy as long as they are diagnosed early enough and have access to treatment.

What will I be tested for?

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV): HIV is a virus which can cause the immune system to fail. It can be passed by sex with an infected person, from mother to child or by sharing injecting equipment.

Hepatitis B: Hepatitis B is a virus which can cause liver damage. It can be passed by sex with an infected person, from mother to child or by transfer of other body fluids including blood.

Hepatitis C: Hepatitis C is a virus which can cause liver damage. It is usually passed by sharing injecting equipment and rarely by sex.

How will I get the results?

The results will be communicated to you by the team looking after your care. Results will at most take 7 days to return to the team looking after you and are often available within 48 hours. The results are confidential which means they will not be communicated to anyone without your consent or knowledge.

What if I still don't want to have a test?

You will not be tested for HIV or hepatitis against your will. We will support your choice and your care will not be affected by your decision. You are welcome to change your mind and have a test at any point. If you would like further information then please ask a member of staff.