

## What are blood-borne diseases?

Diseases such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) are spread by exposure to infected blood or body fluids, such as semen, vaginal secretions and in some cases, saliva

*You do not have to see blood or body fluids  
on instruments for an infection to occur.*

## Facts on blood-borne diseases:

- The hepatitis B virus can survive on surfaces such as metal, cotton, glass, etc. for 1-2 weeks.
- An individual infected with hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV may **not** show symptoms of illness right away, but are still infectious!
- There **is** a vaccine that will protect you from getting hepatitis B.
- There are **no** vaccines to protect you from getting hepatitis C or HIV.
- Hepatitis B and hepatitis C affect the liver, while HIV affects the body's immune system.
- Hepatitis B is more infectious than HIV.

## How are blood-borne diseases transmitted?

- Using dirty instruments or equipment carrying infected blood or body fluids from one person to another
- Improper cleaning and disinfection or sterilization of instruments/equipment after each client
- Reusing single-use items, such as needles or blades, which can't be properly cleaned and sterilized
- Worker pokes him/herself with a used needle or sharp instrument

## Protect yourself and your clients...

- Thoroughly wash hands before and after each client (using liquid soap and warm water).
- For invasive procedures, single-use, disposable gloves must be worn for each client and discarded after each client. Wash hands before and after using gloves.
- Single-use, disposable, sterile needles and blades must be used and properly discarded.
- Clean and then disinfect items that come into contact with blood or body fluids using an intermediate or high level disinfectant as soon as possible (sterilization is preferable).
- Items that penetrate the skin or which hold sterile items must be cleaned and sterilized after each client.
- Get vaccinated against the hepatitis B virus. Ask your Doctor for more information about the hepatitis B vaccine.

*Adapted and reprinted with permission from Durham Region Health Department.*

### For more information, call

Brockville 613-345-5685  
Smiths Falls 613-283-2740

HealthACTION Line  
at 1-800-660-5853

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