

# HIV, HEPATITIS B AND C

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In 1991, acquiring HIV infection (the virus that causes AIDS) remains the major concern of field care providers. For the past five years, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has been stating that the risk for acquiring other bloodborne diseases is much greater than that of acquiring HIV infection.

Most field care personnel remain unconvinced that this is true. The following information is presented to assist your understanding of the degree of risk for each of the diseases of major concern. Hepatitis B infection is a reportable disease by

their occupation.

Another important point in discussing hepatitis B is that there has been a direct link between this disease and the development of liver cancer. Thus, it is clear that hepatitis B infection can result in long term chronic disease, liver cancer and death.

Yet, this disease is preventable by participation in a vaccine program. The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) has mandated that hepatitis B vaccine be offered free of charge to



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law. Each year at least 300,000 new cases of this disease are reported. It is also important to note that many physicians do not report all cases of the disease. Therefore, we can perhaps double the number that actually occur.

Each year about 12,000 health care personnel (this includes fire/rescue personnel) acquire this disease in the course of providing care. Of this number, more than 250 die each year as the result of acquiring this disease. It might be said that this is the leading cause of death in health care workers who acquire a bloodborne disease by virtue of

fire/rescue personnel, in particular, those who come into contact with blood and body fluids. All personnel should learn about the vaccine, its safety and its efficacy and participate in a vaccine program.

If this is done, the risk of hepatitis B can be avoided. Currently, the risk of acquiring hepatitis B from an infected patient via a needle stick injury is listed at 6 - 30%.

Hepatitis C is the new kid on the block. It is one virus in the Non A, Non B hepatitis group. It is estimated that 150,000 cases are reported in this

With each of these diseases, one will not know who is or is not infected. With hepatitis B and hepatitis C, 50-60% of infected persons do not exhibit any signs or symptoms. And, we will not know who is HIV infected as it is without sign and/or symptoms. Therefore, the practice of using personal protective equipment and participation in your department's hepatitis B vaccine program are the most effective ways to reduce risk. Remember, there is no way to have a 100% risk free work environment.

Signs and symptoms	Mode of transmission	Primary Material	Excretory Material
low fever, dry cough, loss of voice	salivary contact, blood, hands	blood	bowels, nasal washings
low fever, dry cough, loss of voice	salivary contact	salivary blood	bowels, nasal washings
low fever, dry cough, loss of voice, loss of appetite, malaise, headache	blood, oral, secretory, sexual contact	blood, salivary contact	bowels, nasal washings, sweat
low fever, dry cough, loss of voice	blood	blood	bowels, nasal washings
low fever, dry cough, loss of voice	blood, mosquito vector	blood	bowel washings
low fever, dry cough, loss of voice	mosquito, mouth fly	oral	none
low fever, cough	airborne	sputum	mask
oral and conjunctival lesions, low fever, malaise, headache	direct contact, blood	drainage from genital lesions, blood	bowels, nasal washings
low fever, dry cough, loss of voice	airborne	sputum	mask

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