

Blood Borne Viruses

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

What are Blood Borne Viruses (BBVs)?

BBVs are viruses that are transmitted (passed) from an infected person to others. Many people do not have any symptoms and so do not know they are infected. They can therefore unknowingly pass infection on to others.

Hepatitis B (HBV)

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver and can lead to long-term liver damage (cirrhosis and liver cancer). Treatments are available through specialist clinics and a vaccine is also available (see HBV vaccination later).

Hepatitis C (HCV)

Hepatitis C is a virus that affects the liver and can lead to long-term liver damage (cirrhosis and liver cancer). There is no vaccine, but treatment is available that can cure the virus with high success rates and minimal side effects.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system and destroys its defences against infection and disease. There is no vaccine, but specialist care and treatment is available.

BBVs can be transmitted through:

- unprotected sexual intercourse.
- sharing any equipment to inject or snort drugs.
- an infected mother to her child, usually during delivery or breastfeeding.
- skin puncture by blood contaminated sharp instruments such as needlestick injury, tattoo 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.

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

- ALWAYS:**
- use a condom when having sexual intercourse.
 - 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 any equipment, including needles/syringes, spoons, filters, water, pipes, snorting equipment and even surfaces to prepare drugs.
 - share toothbrushes or razors.

HBV Vaccination can prevent transmission of hepatitis B

Vaccination is recommended for:

- individuals at high risk of exposure to the virus, such as people who inject drugs or those with multiple sexual partners.
- close household contacts and sexual partners of people with HBV.
- people travelling abroad to areas where HBV infection is common.
- those at occupational risk of having contact with blood and body fluids.
- people with chronic (long-term) disease such as kidney or liver disease and hepatitis C infection.
- prisoners.
- people receiving regular blood or blood products and their carers.
- families adopting children from countries where hepatitis B is common.

Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV

PrEP is a pill that can make it less likely for the person taking it from getting HIV, if exposed to the virus. PrEP is available on the NHS for people at ongoing risk. To find out about PrEP contact your local Sexual Health Service.

HIV post exposure prophylaxis (PEP)

PEP is a course of medication which can be used to reduce the risk of HIV occurring following exposure..

Where can I go to get tested?

- Testing can be done by your GP.
- Testing should be offered annually to clients who attend drug and alcohol support services throughout Highland.
- Testing is available in some community pharmacies.

Testing is also offered at the following sites:

- **Highland Alcohol & Drug Advice & Support Service (HADASS)**
Church Street, Inverness 01463 717594
- **Highland Sexual Health Service** offer clinics throughout Highland. Further information can be found at <https://www.highlandsexualhealth.co.uk> or by calling 01463 888300
- **Waverley Care**, Ardross Street, Inverness 01463 711585 <https://www.waverleycare.org/>

Injecting equipment providers

A full list of injecting equipment providers in Highland is available at:
<https://www.needleexchange.scot/Search/NeedleExchange>

Condoms are available to buy in most pharmacies and supermarkets. They are also available free from sexual health clinics, GP Practices and some community Pharmacies.

To order free condoms from **Highland Sexual Health**, call us on 01463 888300 or email at:
nhshighland.freecondomrequests@nhs.scot

You can also get a supply by using **Waverley Care's** 'Free Condom Scheme'

For more information on BBVs

- **NHS Highland Sexual Health Service** - <https://www.highlandsexualhealth.co.uk>
- **Waverley Care** - <https://www.waverleycare.org/>
- **Hepatitis Scotland** - www.hepatitisscotland.org.uk
- **Hep C Scotland** - www.hepcscot.org
- **British Liver Trust** - www.britishlivertrust.org.uk
- **PrEP Scotland** - www.prep.scot