Body Fluid Exposure

Body fluid exposure happens most often with blood and sexual contact. It also happens by sharing needles. Most of the time this type of exposure does not cause any problems. Several infections can be passed by body fluid exposure. **The biggest risk is for getting Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, or HIV infection (the virus that causes AIDS).**

Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C cause a serious liver infection. This can cause death. Immunization against Hepatitis B can prevent this infection. Your caregiver may want you to get these shots. All health care workers or those exposed to human body fluids regularly should be immunized against Hepatitis B. This requires a first dose with booster doses at 1 and 6 months. There is no Hepatitis C vaccine. There is no vaccine against AIDS.

The risk of transmitting HIV infection by a single body fluid exposure is very small. Blood exposure to mucous membranes has on average caused 1 HIV infection for every 1,000 exposures if the source is known to carry HIV. About 1 in 300 needle stick recipients from a known HIV positive person get infected. Infection with HIV is very serious. High risk exposures should consider post-exposure preventive treatment. **Treatment reduces the chance of getting an HIV infection.**

A combination of anti-HIV drugs is recommended for risky exposures. Preventive treatment should be started as soon as possible. It is usually continued for 4 weeks. Blood tests for HIV should be taken immediately, and repeated at 3-6 weeks and again at 3 and 6 months.

Arrange follow-up with your caregiver.

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