

## **Blood Borne Infection screening - Information for Young People and Carers**

The doctor you met today has recommended that you have a blood test. The blood test is looking for the following infections: Hepatitis B; Hepatitis C; Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and Syphilis. It is important for you to understand why we want you to have the test, as it is your decision whether to have the blood test or not.

### **How might I have caught these infections?**

These infections can all be passed from person to person. The infections can be passed on from a mother to her unborn baby. Some children are born with infections that they are not aware of until they are much older.

Your doctor might think that you have been at risk from infection because you are from a part of the world where the infections are more common. During travelling to England some children are harmed or might be put in situations where they catch infections.

Lastly, this can occur during sexual intercourse, or through blood, for example if you share a needle with someone who has an infection, it can be passed on to you.

### **Why is it useful for me to find out if I have an infection?**

Most people with infections, especially if they were born with them will feel fit and healthy for a long time. The infection is causing them damage still though. It is possible to have more than one infection at the same time.

Not all of the infections can be cured, but medication stops the disease getting worse, and keeps people healthy. Without treatment and monitoring, all of these infections can cause people to become severely ill or even die.

HIV treatments have improved so much that it is now possible to lead a normal length life, and for women with HIV to have babies who are not infected with the virus.

It is also important to know if you have an infection, so you can learn how to stop it being passed on to other people.

## **How will the test be done and who will know whether I have an infection?**

You will have blood taken using a needle, usually near your elbow. This is done by a Phlebotomist (a person who does blood tests as their job) the test result is usually back within three weeks.

The doctor you have met today will contact you. If the blood tests show that you have no infection, you will be sent a letter. Otherwise, you will be offered another appointment to discuss the results.

The results of your blood test will be given to you and to your GP, and to other doctors who will look after you to treat infections. Nobody else will be told unless you want them to be. It is important that you have support in looking after your health so you may want to discuss this with an adult that you trust.

## **What will happen if I have got one of these infections in my blood?**

You will be seen by a specialist doctor. They will talk to you about the treatment that you need, and they will organise for you to have your health checked regularly.

## **Read here for more information about each infection:**

### What is Hepatitis B virus?

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver. It can damage and scar the liver, and in some people it can lead to liver cancer.

### What is Hepatitis C virus?

Hepatitis C is another virus that can damage the liver. In most people the liver damage is mild, but in some people it can cause serious liver damage or cancer in adult life.

### What is HIV?

HIV is a virus that attacks the body's defense system that fights infections (immune system). This stops the body fighting off infections that a healthy body would be able to.

### What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a bacterial infection that is either caught from sexual intercourse, or is passed on to a baby from a mother who had the infection whilst she was pregnant. It can cause sores and skin rashes at first, and make people feel unwell. If it isn't treated it then affects different parts of the body, including the brain, and can cause death.

Children who are born with syphilis can get damage to lots of different parts of their body, including the brain, bones and teeth.

Syphilis is usually treated with antibiotics.