

# HIV, Hepatitis B & Hepatitis C Information

**HIV, Hepatitis B & Hepatitis C are infectious diseases spread through contact with infected blood and bodily fluids.**

The more common **routes of transmission** of blood borne viruses (BBV) include:

- **Unprotected sexual intercourse** (There is also at risk of other sexually transmitted diseases such as Gonorrhoea, Syphilis and Chlamydia)
- **sharing injecting equipment**; needles and syringes.
- **skin puncture by blood-contaminated sharp objects** (needles for piercings, tattooing instruments, razors or glass); a
- **childbirth** (the mother infects the child either before or during birth, or through breast-feeding).

Less common routes of transmission are:

- **contamination of open wounds** (such as blood injuries during sporting activities)
- **splashing of the mucous membranes of the eye, nose or mouth**
- **human bites when blood is drawn**

There is also a risk of acquiring a BBV infection via **blood transfusion**. However, in the UK, all blood donations are screened for HBV, HCV and HIV, meaning the risk is remote.

## HIV

Worldwide, HIV is most commonly acquired through sexual intercourse.

Unscreened blood or blood products and reuse of needles are also a risk.

HIV is more common in many countries than it is in the UK.

- There were an estimated 39.9 million people living with HIV at the end of 2023, over 65% are in the African Region.
- In 2023, 1.3 million people acquired HIV WHO 2024.

Sex workers are 13 times more at risk of HIV compared with the general population.

There is currently no vaccine against HIV.

**HIV is not caught from mosquito bites or by normal social contact**

HIV Testing is available at Well Travelled Clinics for individuals who require testing for Visa purposes or healthcare work overseas. However, if you think you have been exposed, you should see your GP, go to an emergency walk in centre, or a sexual health clinic for advice.

## Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a virus causing inflammation of the liver. The virus can cause an acute illness lasting several weeks, which can sometimes lead to chronic infection. Liver cancer or cirrhosis can develop many years later.

### Hepatitis B Vaccination vaccine schedules:

0, 1 and 6-month schedule or

0,1,2 months and 12 months or

Days 0, 7, 21 and 12 months (adults only, but may be considered from 16 years of age)

A 5-year booster dose is not routinely required for travellers or healthcare workers who are known responders.

## Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a viral infection 75% of those infected develop chronic Hepatitis C infection and associated cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer.

There is currently no vaccine against Hepatitis C.

### Travellers at increased risk include those:

- Travelling for prolonged periods e.g., back-packers
- Intending to live in intermediate to high-risk countries especially children.
- At risk due to occupation, e.g., nurses, doctors, lab workers
- Travelling to obtain medical or dental treatment abroad.
- Competing in contact sports.

**Prevention:**

All BBVs are transmitted in the same way.

Even if you are vaccinated against Hepatitis B, you should still take preventative steps to reduce your risk of exposure to Hepatitis C and HIV

- Avoid unprotected sex. Use good quality condoms if appropriate. Buy before you travel and check for CE & British Standards Kitemark.



- Avoid unnecessary medical or dental treatment when travelling.
- Avoid recreational drug use and sharing of needles, tattoos, body piercing and acupuncture – certain beauty treatments can also pose a risk.

**Remember, excess alcohol might make you do something you regret later**

- Avoid sharing toothbrushes and razors.
- if you are travelling to a resource poor setting to avoid exposure to BBV consider carrying a first aid/medical kit.

First aid/ medical kits are available to purchase at Well Travelled Clinics.

<https://www.welltravelledclinics.co.uk/first-aid-kits>

**If you think that you may have been exposed to HIV, Hepatitis B & Hepatitis C seek medical assessment urgently.**

World Health Organization (WHO) 22 July 2024  
[HIV/AIDS \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/hiv/aids)

[HIV and AIDS - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

[Hepatitis B - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

[Hepatitis C - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)