



What to do in the case of a community-based needlestick injury

If an injury occurs from a needlestick found in the community, follow the instructions below. These instructions also apply to injuries occurring from other potentially contaminated objects in the community.

1. **Allow the wound to bleed freely.** Do not squeeze the wound. This may damage the tissues and increase the risk of infection.
 2. **Wash the wound with soap and water.** Do not apply bleach or alcohol to the wound.
 3. **Go to your local emergency department immediately for follow-up care.**
- An assessment will be done to determine the need for post-exposure prophylaxis (e.g., medications and/or vaccinations to further reduce the risk of transmission). The effectiveness of these medications decreases with time since the injury occurred, making it important to seek assessment as soon as possible.
 - Baseline blood tests for hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) will be done at this visit, with follow-up blood tests to be done over the next three months to make sure none of these viruses have been transmitted. [Provide your healthcare provider with a link to OPH's information for healthcare professionals webpage during your visit.](#)
 - Your healthcare provider may also recommend tetanus vaccination.

What are the risks associated with needle stick injuries that have occurred from community exposure?

When a needlestick injury occurs, concerns arise about exposure to blood-borne viruses, particularly human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B virus (HBV), and hepatitis C virus (HCV). The risk of getting these viruses via a community needle stick injury is extremely low and can be further reduced with prompt medical attention. If previously vaccinated for hepatitis B, the risk of HBV transmission is virtually zero, and individuals are encouraged to ensure they are up to date on this and other vaccines

The risk of transmission of HIV, HBV and HCV via a needle stick injury acquired in a community setting is far less than in a healthcare setting because:

- The injury does not occur immediately after needle use.
- The needle rarely contains fresh blood.
- Any virus present has been exposed to drying and environmental temperatures.
- Injuries are usually superficial.