

The Gut Foundation in collaboration with CDHB are looking for Companies who will take the opportunity to be part of a Canterbury research initiative and take care of your staff at the same time.

Did you know that prior to 1992 New Zealand had no screening for blood products?

So, what does that mean for our population?

Basically, anyone who had a blood transfusion prior to 1992 could have been given blood products that carried blood borne infectious diseases.

One particular infection, Hep C can go unnoticed by those infected for decades with people experiencing no symptoms. This of course exacerbates the problem as those infected people can then infect others through a variety of blood to blood transfer circumstances. These newly infected then have no symptoms for ten or more years. In 2006 the Ministry of Health estimated that 30,000 New Zealanders were living with Hepatitis C. Their latest figures now suggest that more than 50,000 people are infected with approx. 30,000 unaware that they have it

The Gut Foundation wants to front foot this issue and protect the health of Cantabrians. **It only takes a tiny drop of infected blood to come in contact with another person with a cut or abrasion and they can become infected.** As the blood from an infected person remains infectious for at least a day even after the blood has dried and in some circumstances perhaps a week or longer, you only need to handle a piece of equipment with tainted blood and if you have broken skin or cuts the transfer can occur.

**Blood -
borne
VIRUS**



Who is most at risk?

1. People working in environments where small incidental work accidents such as minor cuts and abrasions can cause blood exchange
2. People with Tattoos. Tattoo parlours are not regulated in New Zealand and whilst they might use new and sterile needles if their tubes and ink are contaminated then transfer can occur
3. People with Body piercing for a similar reason to the Tattoo scenario.
4. Sharing items that may contain blood such as nail scissors, razors and nail files
5. Medical or dental procedures with unsterilised equipment
6. Acupuncturists who might transfer blood to someone else if they have not taken adequate precautions
7. Attending to an accident victim without using sterile gloves.
8. People who have lived, worked or received medical treatment in a high-risk country (South East Asia, China, Eastern Europe (including Russia), or the Middle East).

What are we able to do about this problem?

1. We attend your company or work site at a time that is convenient for you
2. Staff are given a finger pick test just as when you get a blood test
3. Within 20-30 minutes we can identify if anyone has the concerning antigens
4. A full Blood test is then done and if the results of that show infection, an eight- week course of tablets will cure the blood disease
5. Left un diagnosed Hep C is a death sentence leading to Liver cancer or Liver failure

What is required from companies

1. To allow their staff to get the finger prick test
2. Companies or staff to pay the \$12 for the cost of the test. Any further treatment that is required comes under the health system



Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus that can damage the liver. Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C infection.

Most people infected with hepatitis C will often have no symptoms so they will not know they are infected. If left untreated, people infected with hepatitis C may develop scarring of the liver which can lead to cirrhosis and in some cases liver failure or liver cancer.

Because we now have a funded cure available, the Gut Foundation believe that every New Zealander infected with hepatitis C needs to be identified so that they can be given access to this life saving treatment.

The screening test you will be getting today courtesy of your company, tests for the presence of antibodies against hepatitis C.. This antibody test will only tell us if you have ever been in contact with(or exposed to) the virus. It doesn't mean that you are currently infected with hepatitis C.

If your test shows **NO** presence of antibodies:

This means that you have not been in contact with the hepatitis C virus and are very unlikely to be infected.

However it is important to always be aware of the risk factors and if you suspect you could have been exposed within the past three months with blood to blood contact then you could consider being retested in a few months' time. The reason for this is that the virus can take an average of 74 days to convert to antibodies.

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