

## **Blood Borne Virus Testing Explained**

### **Aneurin Bevan Specialist Drug and Alcohol Service**

#### **Opt-out blood borne virus testing**

Patients accessing substance misuse service, whether they are seeking help for drug or alcohol use are offered a blood borne virus test as part of a routine health assessment. Regular testing will be throughout your time engaging with the substance misuse service.

#### **What is a blood borne virus?**

Blood borne viruses include hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. They are passed from person to person through blood-to-blood contact. However, the viruses can also be present in other bodily fluids so can be sexually transmitted as well.

#### **How might I have come into contact with a blood borne virus?**

- Tattoos / Body piercing.
- Sharing personal items such as razors, tweezers, toothbrushes, hair clippers.
- Unprotected sexual contact – vaginal, anal or oral sex.
- Blood transfusions – prior to 1991.
- Sharing equipment for taking drugs, such as: bank notes, needles, syringes, filters, spoons, pipes, straws.
- Mother to baby.

#### **How is the test carried out?**

A simple and quick process called a 'Dry blood spot' test.

- Small sample of blood is collected using a finger prick device
- Results are available in 3-4 weeks' time.



## Why get tested?

- Worried about infection – reduce your anxiety and find out your status.
- Negative result – reduce your risk of future infections by learning how to stay safe and healthy.
- Positive results – you can access support and treatment. Also can ensure you don't pass on the virus to others.
- Treatments for hepatitis C can cure almost everyone with the infection.
- Treatments start with testing.

## What can we test for?

**Hepatitis C** - a virus that causes liver damage, it progresses very slowly and can take up to 20 years before any symptoms appear. It is curable.

**Hepatitis B** - a virus that causes liver damage. It is treatable, and you can have a vaccination to prevent contracting Hep B.

**HIV** - human immunodeficiency virus attacks the immune system (body's defence against diseases). HIV is a long-term but manageable condition. Early detection is important.

## Pre – test questions

- Discuss your concerns with your doctor, counsellor or drug worker.
- Insurance and mortgages – A positive test result may mean a life insurance or a mortgage linked to a life policy could be refused or the premium loaded.
- It is a difficult decision but you are encouraged to discuss a positive result with your family and sexual partners. They may want to be tested.
- Simple protective should be enough to protect healthcare workers and be access medical and dental treatment anywhere.
- Confidentiality – the testing with the service is confidential and results are reported on a confidential national public health database.

## What if I have a positive test result?

If you have tested positive, taking steps to get the right care is straightforward. You will be referred to see a specialist nurse for support and guidance. Further confirmatory tests may be carried out and you will be supported to access treatment if required.

Name: ..... (please print)

Signature: .....

Date: .....

## Did you know?

- An estimated 400,000 people in the UK are affected by Hepatitis B or C.
- Less than 20% people living with Hepatitis C in the U.K. have actually been diagnosed.
- Hepatitis C is curable – approximately 90% treatment success rate.
- New Hepatitis C treatments are available and they are interferon free, tablet only, with minimal reported side effects, and treatment usually lasts 8-16 weeks.
- You can get free hepatitis B vaccinations from the substance misuse service.
- Anyone can get HIV if they are sexually active, regardless of whether you are gay or straight, or where you come from.
- Over 95% of people living with HIV in the U.K. acquired it through sex without a condom.
- If a person with HIV is on effective treatment, with an undetectable viral load, they cannot pass on the virus.

## Contact details:

### Aneurin Bevan Specialist Drug and Alcohol Service

ABSDAS (Newport and Caerphilly) - 01633 216777

ABSDAS (Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, and Torfaen) – 01873 735566

Needle exchange service (Newport)

## Other useful contacts and websites:

Hepatitis C Trust – [www.hepctrust.org.uk](http://www.hepctrust.org.uk)

Confidential Helpline: 020 7089 6221

NAT (National Aids Trust) – [www.nat.org.uk](http://www.nat.org.uk)

Terrance Higgins Trust – [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)  
Helpline: 0808 802 1221

British Liver Trust – [www.britishlivertrust.org.uk](http://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk)

**“This document is available in Welsh /  
Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**