

What are Blood Borne Viruses?

Blood borne viruses (BBV's) are bugs that live in the blood.

There are 3 BBV's that you may have heard of:

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV

They are passed from person to person in a number of different ways:

- Unsterile medical treatment or unsterile body piercings / tattoos (particularly abroad)
- Sex without the use of a condom
- Sharing of drug taking equipment e.g. needles, syringes, spoons, filters, and water if injecting or straws if snorting.
- Blood to blood contact from an infected person (through fights and bites when there is a lot of blood or a mum can pass it to her baby when she is pregnant, or pricking yourself with a used needle).

Sometimes people who have these viruses in their body can be treated differently by others and are made to feel unwanted or stigmatised. It is important to remember that the BBV's **cannot** be passed from person to person by:

- Shaking hands
- Sneezing and/or coughing
- Kissing and/or hugging
- Handling food, sharing a plate or cutlery
- Sharing a bathroom, toilets, or showers

People living with these viruses can have them in their body for many years and not show any signs of being unwell, but if the viruses are left untreated they can cause lots of problems. There are now lots of different treatments available that help the person live a healthy life.

If someone is worried that they have been at risk of catching a BBV they should speak to either their doctor or access a service such as:

- Highland Alcohol & Drug Advice and Support Service: 01463 717594
- Highland Sexual Health: 01463 704202
- Waverley Care: 01463 711585

If you live outside the Inverness area you can contact one of the numbers above and they will be able to help you find a service near to where you live.

Please contact lynda.davidson@nhs.scot (Tel. 01463 704886) if you would like more help on this topic within school.