

# Hepatitis B and HIV Information

## HIV and other infectious diseases

- Worldwide, HIV is most commonly caught through heterosexual sex.
- It is also caught through unscreened blood or blood products and reuse of needles. HIV is more common in many countries than in the UK.
- In some areas up to 90% of prostitutes and 30% of the local population are infected. People with HIV infection do not usually look ill.
- Anyone who has casual sex will risk catching a sexually transmitted disease such as *HIV, Hepatitis B, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis and Chlamydia*.

## Reduce the risk:

- Sex with someone new is risky. Make it safer. Use good quality condoms if appropriate. Buy before you travel and check for British Standards  Kitemark.
- Condoms can also prevent unintended pregnancy**
- Avoid unnecessary medical or dental care and blood transfusion unless essential
- Avoid tattoos, acupuncture and body piercing
- Avoid recreational drug use and sharing of needles
- Excess alcohol can weaken inhibitions and cause precautions to be forgotten

Consider travelling with a commercially packed medical kit containing sterile needles and syringes.

**HIV is not caught from mosquitoes or by normal social contact**

## 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 is spread through contact with contaminated blood and body fluids. Transmission is similar to HIV infection but Hepatitis B is about 50-100 times more infectious.

## Routes of transmission include:

- Sexual contacts.
- Invasive procedures using contaminated needles and equipment.
- Infected blood transfusions and blood products.
- Contact sport injuries.

## High-risk travellers:

- Those travelling for prolonged periods in high risk areas, e.g. back-packers
- Those intending to live in high risk countries especially children.
- Those at risk through their occupation i.e. nurses, doctors, lab workers.
- Those intending to compete in contact sport in high risk countries.

Remember to avoid unnecessary medical or dental treatment when travelling. Avoid unprotected sex, tattoos, body piercing and acupuncture – certain beauty treatments can also pose a risk.

Avoid sharing toothbrushes and razors. Consider travelling with a medical kit containing sterile needles, syringes and suture material

## Vaccination against Hepatitis B:

Hepatitis B vaccine has been proven to be a very safe and highly effective vaccine preventing chronic hepatitis in those not previously affected with the virus.

Primary course of 3 or 4 injections  
Our travel advisors can tell you the best schedule of vaccination to follow for Hepatitis B protection.