

Bodily Fluid & Needle Sticks



For years, the scariest of infectious diseases was HIV. Today's nemesis, however, is hepatitis C (hep C), a virus that is spread by contact with the blood of an infected person and eventually causes liver disease. While health officials estimate that about 1 million people in the United States are HIV infected, about 3 million to 4 million Americans are infected with hep C.

Several factors make hep C a deadlier adversary than HIV. For example, HIV cannot live outside the body, whereas the hep C virus can live outside the body for up to seven days. One drop of HIV-positive blood contains about eight live viral particles, while one drop of hep C-infected blood contains about 100, making transmission of the virus that much more likely.

Which brings us to the real question: Exactly how vulnerable are you as police officers to contracting disease from a needle stick, a blood splash, or convict spit?

Conversion rates are actually strikingly low. According to the Centers for Disease Control, those exposed to HIV have a 0.3 percent chance (1 in 300) of becoming HIV positive. The risk after exposure from contact to the eye, nose, or mouth is approximately 0.1 percent, or 1 in 1,000. The risk after exposure of the skin to HIV-infected blood is estimated to be less than 0.1 percent. And a small amount of blood on intact skin probably poses no risk at all.

The risk of conversion to hepatitis is slightly higher. Those who received hepatitis B vaccine and developed immunity to the virus are at virtually no risk for infection. For the unvaccinated person, the risk from a single needle stick or a cut exposure to hep B-infected blood ranges from 6 to 30 percent, and depends on the level of the virus and its antigens in the source's blood. Of those exposed to hep C from a needle stick or cut, the risk of infection is approximately 1.8 percent. The

risk following a blood splash is unknown, but is believed to be very small.

The Good News is that You Probably Won't Get It- **HOWEVER**-Show respect for what is clearly a retinue of deadly adversaries by donning your personal protective equipment.

The Eyes Have It - Many officers fear needle sticks, but eye splashes are far more frequent, with body fluid to non-intact skin running a close second. Remember, you don't need a court order to put a mask or hood on a spitting suspect.

- Wash Your Hands, use Germ Killer. ***When washing your hands, remember that friction is the key to cleanliness. Not hot water. Not even soap. Scrub your hands for at least two minutes*
- Wash Your Hands-The hepatitis virus can live outside the body in any number of places, like the back seats of patrol cars, on a baton, a door handle, your clothes, inside the treads of your shoes, and most important, on your hands.
- The best prevention is to keep your hands away from your face and its possible ports of entry (eyes, mouth, nose). Don't eat, smoke, or drink before washing your hands.
- Thoroughly clean your patrol shoes! **Viruses can live in the treads, be deposited on the carpet, and infect your family!**

If you either a) get stuck by a needle or other sharp, or b) get blood or other potentially infectious materials in your eyes, nose, mouth or on broken skin; immediately flood the exposed area with water and clean any wound with soap and water or other skin disinfectant if available. Report the exposure to your supervisor and seek immediate medical attention.

**Please Contact FSRMF with Any Questions
or for Additional Information at loss.control@fstrmf.org**