



Contact with blood and bodily fluids: information for families

On very rare occasions, a member of staff might injure themselves in such a way it is possible that your child's bodily fluids could enter their body. Bodily fluids include saliva, urine and faeces (poo) but this information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) is mainly concerned with blood. It explains what will happen if a member of staff comes into contact with your child's bodily fluids in such a way that there is a risk of transmitting infection.

Contact with bodily fluids usually happens because of a needlestick injury, where the member of staff accidentally pricks themselves with a needle. This is obviously distressing for the member of staff, and so the hospital has a specific policy to help them deal with it.

It is hospital policy that after an accident of this sort, we will ask you to agree to have a small blood sample taken from your child. This will then be tested for various diseases that can be passed from one person to another through blood or bodily fluids. These conditions and diseases are called 'blood borne viruses'.

The policy also states that the member of staff taking the blood sample will ask you and your child some personal details including: where you were each born and grew up, if either of you have ever had a blood transfusion, your sexual and drug-taking histories and whether either of you have recently had any tattoos or body piercing. These are similar questions to those you would be asked if you were a blood donor.

How will the blood be taken and how much?

If your child has given a blood sample in the past month or so, which has been stored, we may be able to test this for blood borne viruses instead of taking a new sample. Otherwise, a doctor or nurse will take the blood sample using a cannula, central venous catheter line, implantable port or PICC if your child already has one. If your child needs to have blood taken from a vein or implantable port, the doctor or nurse will put some local anaesthetic on first to numb the area.

About a test tube full of blood will be taken. This is about two teaspoonfuls. This amount of blood is needed as various tests will be carried out in the laboratories.

What tests will be carried out?

The laboratory staff will test the blood sample for various diseases, including Hepatitis and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which can be passed on by blood and other bodily fluids. By asking you to agree to this testing, we are not implying that your child has any of these diseases. It is only done to protect and reassure our staff.

What are the implications of these tests?

It is rare for these tests to find any trace of these diseases. If the test results are negative, that will be the end of the matter as the information will remain confidential and will not be passed on to your GP or anyone else.

In the rare circumstance that the tests show some trace of one of these diseases, the medical team caring for your child will tell you the results. We will also need to tell our Infectious Diseases Team, so they can visit you to offer advice, information and support about options for more tests and treatment. In many cases, there are effective methods of treating these diseases. They will also give you information about any support organisations available.

If you have any questions about this, please talk to the doctor or nurse taking the blood sample.