HIV

What are HIV and AIDS?
HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. This is the virus that causes AIDS. HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system. The immune system gives our bodies the ability to fight infections. HIV destroys a type of white blood cell (T cells or CD4 cells) that the immune system must have to fight disease.

AIDS stands for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. AIDS is the final stage of HIV infection. It can take years for a person infected with HIV, even without treatment, to reach this stage. Having AIDS means that the virus has weakened the immune system to the point at which the body has a difficult time fighting infection.

How is HIV Spread?
HIV is a fragile or “weak” virus and cannot live for very long outside the body. As a result, HIV is NOT transmitted through day-to-day activities such as shaking hands, hugging or a casual kiss. You CANNOT become infected from a toilet seat, drinking fountain, doorknob, dishes, food or mosquitoes.

HIV is primarily found in the blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk of an infected person. HIV is transmitted or spread in 3 main ways:
- Having sex (anal, vaginal, or oral) with someone infected with HIV
- Sharing needles and syringes with someone infected with HIV
- Being exposed to HIV before or during birth or through breastfeeding

HIV can also be transmitted through blood infected with HIV. However, since 1985, all donated blood in the US has been tested for HIV. Therefore, the risk for HIV infection through the transfusion of blood or blood products is extremely low. Tattooing done in an unlicensed facility or in an informal setting (such as prison) and being exposed to blood during a fight are theoretical risks for getting HIV.

Am I at Risk for Getting HIV?
You may be at increased risk for HIV infection if you have:
- Injected drugs or steroids, during which any part of “the works” (such as needles, syringes, cotton, water) was shared with others
- Had unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex (that is, sex without using condoms), particularly with multiple partners, anonymous partners, men who have sex with men, or someone who injects drugs
- Exchanged sex for drugs or money
- Been given a diagnosis of, or been treated for, hepatitis, tuberculosis, or a sexually transmitted disease (such as syphilis, Chlamydia or Gonorrhea)
- Received a blood transfusion or clotting factor during 1978-1985

Why is it Important to test for HIV?
The only way to know whether you are infected is to be tested for HIV. You cannot rely on symptoms alone,
because many people who are infected with HIV do NOT have symptoms for many years. Someone can look and feel healthy, but can still be infected. Even if you think you are at low risk for HIV infection, you should get tested, but you should definitely get an HIV test if you have any of the risk factors mentioned above. About 1 in every 5 people in the US with HIV doesn’t know that they are infected. Knowing you have HIV allows you to get life saving treatment and take steps to protect others.

Once HIV enters the body, the body starts to produce antibodies (proteins your body makes after it is infected). Most HIV tests look for these antibodies. It can take some time for the immune system to produce enough antibodies for the antibody test to detect, and this time period can vary from person to person. Therefore, if you get HIV tested before your body has the time to make enough antibodies; the HIV test will come back negative even though the virus is in your body. This is called the “window period”. Therefore, if a negative HIV test was conducted within 3 months after possible HIV exposure, you should request repeat testing about 6 months after the exposure occurred. Ask your provider if you have any questions about the window period or HIV testing.

HIV testing will be done at intake unless you refuse. You may also request repeat testing any time while you are in prison (but not more often than every 6 months) by kiting your provider or the Infection Control Nurse.

**Is there Treatment for HIV and AIDS?**

There is no cure for HIV, but there are pills available that can keep you healthy. Just like other chronic diseases, such as diabetes or hypertension, even without symptoms, taking a medicine every day can help you live longer. If you test positive for HIV, you will be scheduled to meet with medical staff to go over your test results and to answer all your questions.

**How Do I Protect Myself?**

- Don’t share any part of the works when injecting drugs
- Remain abstinent or always use condoms when having sex

**HEPATITIS**

**What is Viral Hepatitis?**

“Viral hepatitis” means inflammation of the liver caused by a virus. Several different viruses, named hepatitis A, B, C, D and E viruses can cause viral hepatitis. In the US, the most common types are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C. Heavy alcohol use, toxins, medications (including herbals) and certain medical conditions can also cause hepatitis. Hepatitis A, B and C can all cause an acute illness of varying severity, but Hepatitis B and C can also become a chronic condition that may lead to scarring of the liver, liver failure, and liver cancer over time.

There is a vaccine that can prevent Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B in adults at risk for infection. There is NO vaccine for Hepatitis C.

**How are Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C Spread?**

You CANNOT get Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C from casual contact, like touching or hugging.

Hepatitis B is found in the blood, semen, and vaginal fluid of an infected person. Hepatitis B is spread by:

- Having sex (anal, vaginal, or oral) with someone infected with Hepatitis B
• Sharing needles, syringes, or other drug equipment with someone infected with Hepatitis B
• Being exposed to Hepatitis B at birth

Since 1987, the risk for Hepatitis B through the transfusion of blood or blood products has been extremely low.

Hepatitis C is spread mainly through contact with infected blood, especially by sharing needles or other drug equipment. It is less commonly spread by sex and childbirth, but it can occur. Prior to 1992, Hepatitis C was commonly spread through blood transfusion or organ transplant. The risk for Hepatitis C infection through the transfusion of blood or blood products is now extremely low.

Am I at Risk for Getting Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C?
You may be at increased risk for Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C infection if you:
• injected drugs or steroids, and shared any part of “the works” (such as needles, syringes, cotton, water) with others
• had unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex (that is, sex without using condoms), particularly with multiple partners, anonymous partners, men who have sex with men, or someone who injects drugs
• exchanged sex for drugs or money
• received a transfusion of blood or blood products prior to 1987 for Hepatitis B & 1992 for Hepatitis C
• received hemodialysis
• are a healthcare worker
• are an Immigrant or child of an immigrant from an area with high rates of Hepatitis B
• got a tattoo from an unlicensed facility or in an informal setting (such as jail or prison)
• shared straws or other device (such as a rolled bill) to snort drugs

How Do I Protect Myself from Hepatitis B and C?
The hepatitis B vaccine offers the best protection against Hepatitis B, but there is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.

You can reduce your risk for Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C by:
• Always using latex condoms for sex (anal, vaginal or oral)
• Not sharing any part of the “works” when injecting drugs or steroids
• Not share personal items that may have come into contact with a person’s blood, such as toothbrushes, razors and nail clippers
• Only getting tattoos or body piercings from a licensed professional, who only uses clean needles and fresh ink
• Avoid fightng involving the exchange of large amounts of blood

What are the Symptoms of Viral Hepatitis?
Symptoms of acute hepatitis include:
• Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
• Fatigue (Tiredness)
• Abdominal pain
• Loss of appetite
• Nausea
• Vomiting
• Diarrhea
• Low grade fever
• Headache
• Joint pain

However, most persons with chronic hepatitis do NOT have any symptoms. Even though a person may not have symptoms or feel sick from chronic hepatitis, damage to the liver can still occur. Symptoms can develop after many years as a sign of advanced liver disease.

**Should I Get Tested for Viral Hepatitis?**
Your doctor can diagnose both acute and chronic infection using one or more blood tests. You should get tested if you have any of the risk factors listed above. Typically, a person first gets a screening test that looks for antibodies to the Hepatitis B and C viruses. Antibodies are made by your body after you are infected. If the screening test is positive, different blood tests are needed to determine whether the infection has been cleared or has become chronic.

**Is There Treatment for Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C?**
There is treatment available for both Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. Not everyone with viral hepatitis requires treatment. Treatment for Hepatitis B and C may include pills, shots, or both. Talk with your provider about the different treatment options available.

Educational trainings about Hepatitis are offered twice a month at WCC for a two-hour time block for those who are interested. A memo will be posted in each unit prior to each class to inform those interested of the date, time and location of the training. You will need to contact your unit Sergeant to be placed on the callout for this training if you choose to attend. These training are also held at the other DOC facilities. Watch for memos or kite the Infection Control Nurse for additional information.

**TUBERCULOSIS**

**What is Tuberculosis?**
“TB” is short for tuberculosis. TB is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. TB usually affects the lungs, but can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine and brain.

**How is TB Spread?**
TB is spread through the air from one person to another. The TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with active TB disease of the lungs coughs, sneezes, speaks, laughs, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.

**What are the symptoms of TB?**
Not everyone infected with TB bacteria become sick. TB can live in your body without making you sick. This is called **latent TB infection**. People with latent TB infection do not feel sick and do not have any symptoms. The only sign of TB infection is a positive reaction to the tuberculin skin test (also called the PPD) or special TB blood test. People with latent TB infection are not infectious and cannot spread TB bacteria to others. However, if TB bacteria become active in the body and multiply, the person will get sick with TB disease. Many people with latent TB infection never get TB disease.

TB bacteria become active if the immune system can’t stop them from growing. When TB bacteria are active, this is called **TB disease**. TB disease will make you sick. Symptoms of TB disease may include a bad cough
lasting 3 weeks or longer, coughing up blood or sputum, chest pain, feeling weak and tired, weight loss, loss of appetite, fever, and sweating at night.

Should I Get Tested for TB?
Everyone in jail and prison should get tested for TB. Everyone is asked if they have any of the most common symptoms of TB disease at intake. You will also have testing for latent TB infection, either by a skin test or a special TB blood test. A positive TB skin test or TB blood test only tells that a person has been infected with TB bacteria. It does NOT tell whether or not the person has TB disease. Other tests, such as a chest x-ray and sample of sputum, are needed to see if a person has TB disease.

Is There Treatment for TB infection and TB disease?
People with latent TB infection do not feel sick and cannot spread the bacteria, but they may develop TB disease in the future. They are often prescribed treatment to prevent them from developing TB disease. Because there are fewer bacteria in a person with latent TB infection, treatment is much easier and usually only one drug is needed.

A person with active TB disease has a large amount of TB bacteria in the body. TB disease can be treated by taking several drugs, sometimes for a year or more. It is very important that people who have TB disease take the drugs exactly as prescribed for the entire course of treatment.

--If you have any other questions or concerns about this information, ask your provider or contact the Infection Control Nurse--