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**IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING HEPATITIS B VACCINES**

Public Health England has advised that there is currently a global shortage of Hepatitis B vaccine which has been caused by problems in the manufacturing process. As a consequence all Occupational health departments have had restrictions applied on the number of vaccines they can obtain so that the available vaccine can be used for those at the highest immediate risk of contracting the virus. These restrictions are expected to continue into 2018.

**How does this affect you?**

As a result of this shortage a course of hepatitis B vaccines which you might usually be offered will be deferred until supply is restored. **This will not affect your ability to commence your clinical placement/research or clinical laboratory role**. Please be reassured we will be keeping the supply situation under review on a regular basis. You will be recalled when the vaccine supply is improved.

**What is Hepatitis B?**

Hepatitis B is a blood borne virus (BBVs).

BBVs are found in the blood and bodily fluids, such as semen and vaginal fluids, of an infected person. It **cannot** be spread by normal social contact such as kissing, holding hands, hugging, coughing, sneezing, or sharing crockery and utensils. Those infected with a BBV may show little or no symptoms of serious disease, but other infected people may be severely ill.

The risk of catching hepatitis B infection in the UK is very low.

The most prevalent BBVs are;

• Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)- a virus which causes disease affecting the body's immune system;

• Hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C; BBVs causing hepatitis, a disease affecting the liver.

Health and Safety policies and procedures are in place to help guard you against being exposed to BBVs in the workplace. Hepatitis B vaccinations are provided as a mitigation measure in case of exposure. Please note currently there are no preventable vaccines for HIV and Hepatitis C infections. Therefore it is important that you adhere to all health and safety working practices and policies within the work place.

**How do I protect myself from a BBV?**

As has always been the case it is your responsibility to ensure thatyour working practices do not put yourself or others at unnecessary risk, by employing safe working practices, and by following recommended infection control procedures and universal precautions.

**Measures you can take to minimise your risk of exposure to Hepatitis B /blood borne viruses**

* Follow all health and safety working practices and policies within the work place. If you do not know what these are immediately speak with your supervisor/manager.
* Ensure safe handling of sharp instruments which if disposable, should be placed into sharps bins provided immediately after use.
* Never lay used sharps instruments down on bedside lockers, window sills or work surfaces, or leave lying amongst swabs, paper towels or linen.
* Never re-sheath used needles.
* Pick up all dropped sharps instruments carefully and dispose of them safely.
* Remember! **Open-Use-Dispose**. Do not let anything interrupt this sequence of events.
* Cover all cuts and breaks in your skin with waterproof dressings or gloves.
* Wash your hands thoroughly after accidental splashing.
* Wear spectacles, goggles or visor when dealing with hazardous materials particularly blood and other body substances which may splash in eyes or mouth.
* If you have a skin problem such as eczema, seek advice from Occupational Health Service.
* Hands must never be inserted into the sharps bin.
* Close sharps bin and lock securely – never fill beyond 3/4 full.

**If you are concerned that you have sustained an exposure**

Vaccinations will still be available for those who may have been accidentally exposed to hepatitis B. In that event, urgent medical attention should be sought as the infection can still be prevented if treated promptly post incident.

Report the injury to your supervisor/manager as soon as possible and contact the University Occupational Health Department for assessment or at the Trust Hospital where you are working. If out of office hours, assessment and treatment of the injury should be undertaken at your nearest Accident & Emergency (A/E) Department.

Please see the University of Manchester’s ‘Inoculation [sharps] injury’ guidance on our webpages for further information. **Please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss any concerns you may have**

**Further sources of information**

[www.occhealth.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.occhealth.manchester.ac.uk/)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/current-global-shortage-of-hepatitis-b-vaccine>

Further information on hepatitis B is available at[www.nhs.uk/conditions/Hepatitis-B/Pages/Introduction](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Hepatitis-B/Pages/Introduction.aspx).

Further information on how to reduce your risk of catching hepatitis B is available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints).

Further advice to travellers is available at[travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/50/hepatitis-b](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/50/hepatitis-b)