



Hepatitis Immunisation for Laboratory Workers

 UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN	Hepatitis Immunisation for Laboratory Workers	Document No.	HS-GN-028
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		Pages	2 of 4
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Revision Record

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Rev 1	August 2023	Due for review & transferred onto new document template

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1.0 Purpose of the Guidance

This guidance is to highlight the requirements for Hepatitis B immunisation for those individuals working in a laboratory setting that handle blood and other body fluids or tissues.

2.0 Scope of Guidance

This guidance covers those individuals (staff and students) who handle human blood samples and other body fluids, tissues organs and other parts of tissue. It is recognised that a risk of Hepatitis B may be present and suitable controls measures must be in place, however immunisation still plays a role.

3.0 Procedure

Work in the laboratory with unscreened samples (where the infection status is unknown) must be undertaken at a minimum of Containment Level 2. The procedural controls of Containment Level 2 and the personal protective equipment which is worn are the main means of protecting laboratory workers. Hepatitis B immunisation (vaccination) does however provide a useful supplement to these precautions although it should be recognised that some laboratory workers may not respond to the vaccine.

Departments should:

- 1) Make strong recommendations that their staff and students undertake a course of Hepatitis B immunisation before starting work in research laboratories if they will be handling unscreened samples of the at-risk materials described above.
- 2) Assign students to projects which will involve handling at-risk materials sufficiently far in advance of laboratory work commencing that the students are able to undertake a course of immunisation. (A minimum of 6 weeks should be allowed prior to commencement of work and particular attention should be given to undergraduate honours projects. If a longer period of notice can be given it will increase the likelihood of individuals responding to the vaccine. When making appointments for immunisations, departments should inform the occupational health service of the dates when laboratory work will commence).

Note 1 – Urine, faeces, saliva, sputum, tears, sweat and vomit present a minimal risk of blood borne viruses infection unless contaminated with blood, although they may be hazardous for other reasons.

Note 2 – Some materials handled in the laboratory may carry risk of infection from biological agents other than blood borne viruses and other immunisations may be advisable. The occupational health service should be contacted for advice if necessary.

Note 3 – The costs of immunisations for undergraduate students must be met by the departments concerned.