

Patient information

Routine testing for blood-borne viruses (BBVs)

BBVs are uncommon in most areas of the UK. They can be passed from one person to another in blood or other body fluids, but they are not transmitted if these body fluids come into contact with unbroken skin.

It is important to know if you have a BBV because there are effective treatments for all these infections and they can become serious if left undiagnosed.

We routinely test for the following BBVs in this clinic to make sure people infected get the care they need in good time:

- **HEPATITIS B.** Most people who get hepatitis B clear it from their bodies completely naturally and have no noticeable symptoms. About five per cent do not and become carriers who can pass the virus to others, and about a quarter of those will go on to develop severe liver damage. There is a vaccine that can prevent you from getting hepatitis B.
- **HEPATITIS C.** This usually has no symptoms, but will take about 20 years to cause liver damage in about 20 to 30 per cent of people infected. There is no vaccine for hepatitis C.
- **HIV.** This is a virus which stops your immune system working and can leave you open to other diseases, some of which can be very serious, even life-threatening. People can be infected for many years without noticeable symptoms. If left untreated HIV infection can lead to AIDS. There is no vaccine for HIV.