

Hepatitis C Risk Activity

Goals:

- To identify levels of risk for hepatitis C (hep C) in different situations.
- To demonstrate harm reduction by highlighting ways of reducing risks.
- To reduce stigma by reinforcing that hep c transmission is about behaviours.

Have Ready:

- At least 5 youth
- No Risk, Low Risk, High Risk cards and risk scenario cards
- Tape for posting cards on the wall
- Flipchart paper and markers

Hep C risk activity intro:

- For hepatitis C to be transmitted from one person to another infected blood needs to get into the bloodstream.
- Blood is the only fluid that carries the hep C virus.
- The most common way we get or pass on hep C is by sharing drug injecting equipment (i.e. needles, spoons, filters).
- There are other ways to pass on the virus as we will see in the activity; some behaviours are more risky than others.
- Tiny amounts can be enough to pass the Hep C from one person to another. You don't have to be able to see the blood.

Instructions:

- Post No, Low and High risk cards.
- Hand out cards with an activity on them, ask youth to post their cards "thermometer" style which means cards can be posted on, around or in between No, Low and High Risk.

- If any of the youth are unsure about where the cards should go, encourage them to take their best guess.

Debrief:

- Read out the cards and ask youth, “**Are all the cards in the right place?**” Starting with High Risk, address the cards and move to Low Risk and keep on debriefing in this way.
- For high and low risk behaviours ask youth, “**How could this be made safer?**” The goal is to show that behaviour can change and some activities can be made less risky.
- See below for correct card placement.

Hep C Risk Activity Card Placement

No Risk	In Between	Low Risk	In Between	High Risk
Being bitten or stung by bugs	Getting a tattoo at a shop	Being wasted	Getting a tattoo from a friend	Sharing injection equipment like needles and syringes
Hugging and kissing	Unprotected Sex	Pregnancy/birth	Sex when you have an STI or open sores	Sharing drug snorting equipment (straws or bills)
Coughing or sneezing	Cleaning up blood(from a fight or injury)	Low self esteem	Sharing toothbrushes, dental floss, nail files	Sharing body piercing needles
			Sharing razors	Sharing ink for tattoos

Highest Risk Activities:

- Sharing needles for drugs and sharing all kinds of drug works including bills, straws, crack or meth pipes, sharing tattoo ink, piercing needles, and anything else that touches blood or open sores.
- Sharing personal hygiene stuff like toothbrushes and nail clippers have risk. Even riskier are razors used for shaving or self harm.

- Unprotected sex is very risky when it comes to HIV and other STI, but lower risk when it comes to hep C. Unprotected sex is more risky for hep C if there are open sores, other STIs or someone is on their moon time/period.
- Getting a tattoo from a friend can be higher risk because needles/ink might be shared.

Lower Risk Activities:

- Being wasted and lowered self esteem don't necessarily put people at risk, it's the behaviours that do. If we have been using substances, are wasted, or have low self esteem, we might have risky sex, fight, not be able to be assertive, people might take advantage of us, inject us with used needles, etc. If we feel bad about ourselves we might be less likely to take care of ourselves and our health, get tested, or be safer. *Encourage discussion on these two points.
- Pregnancy and birth are low risk. It is very rare that a child is born with Hep C if the mom has it. If someone is breastfeeding it is only risky if the nipples are cracked and bleeding, even then the risk is low.
- We put getting a tattoo at a tattoo shop between no and low risk because a licensed shop should have professionals who are knowledgeable about hep C, use brand new needles, separate ink sterilized equipment, proper disposal of used equipment. If these things are in place the risk is extremely low, but not all shops are licensed and follow these precautions.
- The same can be said for professional piercing studios. Body modifications like piercings can be done safer in a shop. The artist should show you the new packaged needles or equipment, new jewellery, or new ink being poured.
- Cleaning up blood can be risky if someone isn't wearing gloves and the blood is infected. Hep C can live outside of the body, exposed like on a table, floor, blades etc. for a number of days.
- Hep C is almost never spread from unprotected sex. However, stress to youth that unprotected sex is high risk for all other STI/HIV.

No Risk Activities:

- Being bitten or stung by bugs, coughing or sneezing, hugging and kissing are all considered no risk, like other casual contact.

Harm Reduction Debrief:

- Either as a large group or in smaller groups, ask youth to brainstorm ways of keeping themselves and others safer from hep C. This list could include...

How can we be safer?

- Don't share drug works like needles
- Use new needles
- If you CANNOT access your own, razor, nail clippers etc, wait a few days before sharing/using
- Get tattoos at tattoo shops
- Use condoms
- Get tested
- Wear gloves if touching/cleaning up blood
- Being informed
- Provide information and resources to peers
- Support positive attitude changes
- Work on self-esteem and self-worth
- Minimizing the negative impact risk activities can have
- Organizing awareness days
- Asking for information in class
- Reducing stigmas and prejudice

Additional Activities:

Ideally, this activity can be followed by:

- Pathways to Health
- Condom Demo

- Internal Condom Demo
- Sex Dam Demo
- Condom Competition
- Condom Play Stations