



Hamilton

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Public Health Services, Health Protection Division
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MEDICAL ADVISORY

Inappropriate Disinfection of Razor Blades

TO: Family Physicians
 Infectious Disease Physicians
 Infection Control Officers (please ensure Labs are informed)
 Emergency Departments
 St. Joseph's Centre for Ambulatory Health Services, Urgent Care

CC: Central West Medical Officers of Health
 Dr. Richard McLean, Acting VP Medical, Hamilton Health Sciences
 Dr. David Higgins, Chief of Staff, St. Joseph's Healthcare
 Dr. Peter Fitzgerald, President McMaster Children's Hospital
 Academy of Medicine

FROM: Michelle Baird, Manager Infectious Disease Program
 January 15, 2010

NOTICE Re: The inappropriate disinfection of straight blade razors in Barber Shops

Recent inspections of barber shops in Hamilton have found that some barbers are re-using or have re-used straight blade razors to shave the faces, necks or side-burns of clients without appropriately disinfecting these tools between clients. The practice of using straight blade razors is not recommended as it could lead to the transmission of bloodborne infections. Amending current practices to comply with optimal infection control standards has been recommended to all barbers within the City.

Hamilton Public Health Services is advising anyone who has had a shave at a barber shop to contact their barber to inquire about their shaving practices or contact Public Health Services for further information. Clients can also contact their health care provider if they feel they are at risk of a blood borne infection. The risk of acquiring bloodborne infections from the re-use of razor blades is considered very low. To date there have been no known cases of hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV attributable to the re-use of razor blades in Hamilton. However, bloodborne infections may go unrecognized and often it is difficult to ascertain the exposure when investigating blood borne infections.

If you decide that testing is necessary we suggest the following tests be considered:

- Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)
- Antibody to hepatitis B surface antigen (anti-HBs)
- Antibody to hepatitis B core antigen (anti-HBc)
- Antibody to hepatitis C (anti-HCV)
- HIV

These tests should be conducted now and repeated 6 months after the last shave with a razor which has been reused without adequate cleaning and sterilization in order to ensure infection has not occurred. If the last shave was greater than 6 months ago, there is no need to repeat the tests.

If you have any questions about this advisory please contact Public Health Services, Infectious Disease Program at 905-546-2063, Monday through Friday 8:30 – 4:30. After hours, on holidays and on weekends please call 905-546-3500 and ask to speak to the Infectious Disease Program Public Health Inspector on call.