

April 30, 2018 • Information for Pierce County Healthcare Providers  
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## Potential Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure and Recall of Patients for Testing

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department has identified two cases of acute hepatitis C in patients with no risk factors for the disease. Both patients visited Good Samaritan Hospital Emergency Department in December 2017. The Health Department identified the first case in early February and linked the second case in April. Working with the hospital and investigators from Washington State Department of Health, we discovered the likely cause of the infections was a nurse who was diverting medication for his/her own use, contaminating patient medication in the process. The nurse is no longer employed at the hospital.

On April 28, 2018, Good Samaritan Hospital sent approximately 2,600 patients a letter about potential bloodborne pathogen exposure at the Emergency Department between Aug. 4, 2017 and March 23, 2018. A lab slip and recommendation to undergo testing were also enclosed. Today, April 30, Good Samaritan Hospital established a hotline for patients to call if they have questions: (866) 268-7220. The hospital also set up a clinician hotline for healthcare providers with specific questions about tests for patients under their care: (844) 467-4724.

The hospital is providing testing free of charge and will provide necessary follow-up care for patients infected because of this incident.

Patients can also get general information about hepatitis C and other bloodborne pathogens at [www.tpchd.org/hepc](http://www.tpchd.org/hepc).

The disease of concern is hepatitis C. Standard bloodborne pathogen exposure testing also includes hepatitis B and HIV, so the hospital is ordering these tests, as well. To account for a testing window period, patients who received medications of concern within 12 weeks of their hepatitis B test and within six weeks of their HIV test will need a repeat test for these pathogens. No patients will need repeat testing for hepatitis C, as RNA tests can be positive within three weeks of exposure.

Hospital staff will notify patients of their test results. Many cases identified will likely have been infected prior to this incident. Public health staff will investigate.

### Actions Requested

- If your patient received a letter and a lab slip in the mail, instruct him or her to follow the directions for testing.
- Direct patients to Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department's website, [www.tpchd.org/hepc](http://www.tpchd.org/hepc), or (253) 798-6500 for more information.

To link to campaign resources or for more information about viral hepatitis, infection prevention and injection safety, visit [www.tpchd.org/stophepc](http://www.tpchd.org/stophepc).