TIME PERIODS OF INTEREST. HIV, STDs VIRAL HEPATITIS

Definitions

Window Period
The time between when a person is exposed to a bacteria or virus and when a test can accurately detect organism.

Incubation Period
The time elapsed between exposure to a bacteria or virus and when symptoms and signs are first apparent.

HIV
Window Period
The window period for HIV tests depending on the test technology being utilized.

- Antibody Tests: 23 to 90 Days. This includes the Chembio SURE CHECK® HIV Rapid Test.
- 4th Generation Test: 18 to 45 Days. This test detects antigens, which are a part of the virus and present during acute HIV.
- Nucleic Acid Test: 10 to 33 Days.

Note: If an individual is concerned about being exposed to HIV in the last 72 hours, they should be referred to a health care provider immediately for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) evaluation.

Incubation Period
Within 2 to 4 weeks after infection. People may experience a flu-like illness, lasting for a few weeks; these symptoms indicate an acute HIV infection.

Chlamydia & Gonorrhea
Window Period
“The nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs) are very sensitive and are able to detect a low number of organisms. The "window period" for the chlamydia and gonorrhea NAAT test is unknown. It may range from ~5 days up to 2 weeks. If patients have a known exposure, they should be tested and treated. If there was a risk exposure, they should be tested at time of visit. If exposure was within 1 to 5 days post exposure and they were uncertain about chlamydia or gonorrhea exposure, retesting two weeks after exposure would be recommended if more reassurance is needed. “– STD Clinical Consultation Network Opinion.

Incubation Period
Chlamydia (CT)
In patients who develop symptomatic infection, the incubation period is estimated to be 7 to 21 days.

Gonorrhea (GC)
The incubation period ranges from 1 to 14 days, with most men becoming symptomatic within 2 to 5 days after exposure. The incubation period in women is variable, but symptoms, when they do occur, usually develop within 10 days of exposure.

Time Periods

- Dual Therapy for Gonorrhea. To be considered appropriately treated for GC, the azithromycin and ceftriaxone must be given on the same day. Appropriate treatment also occurs if ceftriaxone is administered within five days after the azithromycin dose. Patients are recommended to be retreated if they are given ceftriaxone in the clinic and don’t pick up their azithromycin from the pharmacy on that same day.

- Test of Cure (testing 3 to 4 weeks after completing therapy):
  - Chlamydia: Only recommended for pregnant women.
  - Gonorrhea: Recommended for individuals with pharyngeal gonorrhea treated with an alternative regimen.

- Retesting: All individuals diagnosed with chlamydia and gonorrhea should be retested 3 months after completing treatment.

- Abstinence After Treatment. Persons treated for GC and CT should abstain from sexual intercourse for 7 days after single-dose therapy or until completion of a 7-day regimen and resolution of symptoms.

Syphilis
Window Period
There is varying sensitivity of syphilis serologic tests (Table 1). VDRL and RPR test results turn positive 1-2 weeks after chancre formation. FTA-ABS and TP-PA are generally considered equally sensitive in the primary stage of disease.

Additional information is available at ndhealth.gov/HIV or call the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180. Last updated July 2018.
Table 1. Sensitivity and Specificity of Common Serologic Tests in Untreated Syphilis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sensitivity During State of Infection, % (range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VDRL</td>
<td>78 (74-87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR</td>
<td>86 (77-99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTA-ABS</td>
<td>84 (70-100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TP-PA</td>
<td>88 (86-100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELISA (IgG)</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Incubation Period
- **Primary Syphilis**: The chancre typically occurs about 3 weeks (range 10 to 90 days) after exposure. The chancre lasts 3 to 6 weeks.
- **Secondary Syphilis**: 4 to 8 weeks after onset of primary chancre.
- **Tertiary Syphilis**: 1 to 20 years after exposure.
- **Early Neurosyphilis**: Early forms of neurosyphilis usually occur a few months to a few years after initial infection.
- **Ocular syphilis**: Symptoms may develop at any stage.

**Hepatitis B**

Window Period
HBSAg will be detected an average of 4 weeks (range: 1–9 weeks) after exposure. All patients who do not remain chronically infected will be HBsAg-negative by 15 weeks after symptom onset.

Testing in Infants
For infants born to HBsAg-positive mothers, postvaccination testing should be performed 1–2 months after completion of ≥3 doses of a hepatitis B vaccine series. Testing should not be performed before age 9 months in order to avoid detection of anti-HBs from hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) administered during infancy and to avoid detection of HBsAg from vaccine -- HBsAg can be transiently positive for 1–18 days after vaccination.

Incubation Period
If symptoms occur, they begin an average of 90 days (range: 60–150 days) after exposure to HBV.

Other Time Periods
HBV may survive outside the body at least 7 days. Approximately 90% of infants and 25%–50% of children aged 1–5 years will remain chronically infected with HBV. By contrast, approximately 95% of adults recover from HBV infection and do not become chronically infected.

Resources
- [Hepatitis C Treatment Guidelines](#)
- [CDC Hepatitis C Fact Sheet](#)
- [CDC Hepatitis B Fact Sheet](#)
- [National STD Curriculum](#)
- [CDC HIV Website](#)