



ACT
Government

BLOOD TESTING POLICY

Controlled Sports Act 2019

Chief Minister, Treasury &
Economic Development
Directorate

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BLOOD TESTING POLICY

Legislation

The *Controlled Sports Act 2019* (the Act) regulates the conduct of certain combat and other high - risk sports events in a way that minimises harm; and promotes the health and safety of controlled sports contestants.

Under section 25 of the Act contestants must provide a Certificate of Fitness issued by a medical practitioner within the last 30 days. A blood borne virus testing form is not mandatory and can be completed at the discretion of the certifying medical practitioner.

Policy Statement

The ACT Government's approach to testing for blood borne viruses - such as HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C - as part of the Certificate of Fitness requirements has been considered with a human rights framework in mind, balanced with the risk of transmission.

There is a potential risk of blood borne viruses being transmitted during controlled sports from the bleeding or exudative skin wounds of a contestant with a blood borne virus to other contestants via injured skin or mucous membranes. Although data is limited, the generally understood consensus amongst medical professionals is that the likelihood of such transmission is extremely low.

A risk-based approach to testing for blood borne viruses, in place of mandatory testing (and subsequent exclusion), will rely on a medical practitioner discussing an applicant's medical history and blood borne virus exposure risk (for example, participation in needle sharing, having condom-less sex, prior incarceration) and then deciding whether testing for blood borne viruses is required. If the practitioner is confident that the contestant poses a low risk of transmission of a blood borne virus whilst participating or competing in a controlled sport, then medical clearance can be given (providing all other medical requirements are met).

Contestants

As part of a risk-based approach the Certificate of Fitness will include a declaration to be completed by contestants that they are not knowingly competing with an unmanaged blood borne virus.

It is recommended that all contestants consider being vaccinated for hepatitis B prior to competing or participating in a controlled sport. Contestants at risk of getting HIV, can also speak to their medical practitioner about using PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to help them remain HIV negative.

Contestants must disclose to the Medical Practitioner if they have ever been diagnosed with HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C or if they have any risk factors for exposure to a blood borne virus. If a contestant has previously been diagnosed with a blood borne virus, they must be able to show evidence they are managing transmission risks appropriately before they can be declared fit to compete or participate in a controlled sport by a medical practitioner.

Medical practitioners

Prior to declaring a contestant fit to compete or participate in a controlled sport, a medical practitioner should undertake a risk assessment for possible exposure to blood borne viruses. If a medical practitioner identifies that a contestant has one or more risk factors for exposure to HIV, Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C they should consider completing the 'Blood borne virus testing' form.

The risk factors to consider are:

- Shared injecting needles with someone else
- Had a needlestick injury
- Had blood or mucous from another person come into contact with an open wound, mouth or eyes
- Had sex without a condom with a new partner
- Gotten a tattoo or skin piercing
- Travelled to another country
- Been in prison
- Had a blood transfusion, organ or tissue transplant
- Contracted a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)
- (For men) Had sex with men

Where a contestant's blood tests show that they have been exposed to one or more of the relevant viruses, a medical practitioner must determine whether the contestant poses a risk of transmitting the virus to another person whilst participating or competing in the relevant controlled sport, and is therefore considered 'unfit'.

In deciding whether a contestant is 'fit' or 'unfit', a medical practitioner should consider the following—

- whether further testing is required to confirm exposure to a blood borne virus, determine carrier versus cleared viral status (for hepatitis B and hepatitis C) or measure viral load;
- whether the patient is receiving appropriate treatment;
- whether the patient has a detectable viral load;
- the discipline/s of controlled sport the contestant plans to compete or participate in; and
- whether additional advice from a medical practitioner who specialises in the management of the relevant blood borne virus should be sought.

Medical Practitioners may also like to consider recommending the hepatitis B vaccine for all contestants to reduce their exposure risk. Contestants at risk of getting HIV can also be prescribed PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to reduce their risk of becoming HIV Positive. PrEP is now available on the PBS.

The Canberra Sexual Health Centre provides a specialist BBV clinic and non-judgmental care. You may wish to refer your patient to the Centre if they have a BBV or are at risk of one. Medicare cards are not essential. Please see contacts over the page for more information.

CONTACTS

To get in touch with us, please email controlledsports@act.gov.au or call Access Canberra on 13 22 81.

You can also contact Access Canberra using the [online feedback system](#), in [person](#) or by [post](#).

Canberra Sexual Health Centre – specialist clinic run by ACT Health – visit <https://www.health.act.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-centres/canberra-sexual-health-centre> or call 02 5124 2184. Patients can also visit the walk-in clinic. See the website for clinic times and location.

AIDS Action Council ACT – visit <https://aidsaction.org.au/>, or call 02 6257 2855

Hepatitis ACT – visit <https://hepatitisact.com.au/>, email info@hepatitisACT.com.au or call 02 6230 6344

Australian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine – visit <https://www.ashm.org.au/>, email ashm@ashm.org.au or call 02 8204 0700

The World Health Organisation – provides details on prevalence and high-risk regions of the world. See <https://www.who.int/>.



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