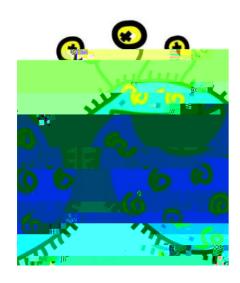
GERMS! KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BACTERIA AND VIRUS INFECTION



This information leaflet has been produced to give you an understanding of what these infections are and offer practical advice about the actions you should take to keep free from infection at work

NFECTIONS: Infections are caused by two different types of germs: viruses and bacteria.

IRUS: There are many types of virus that range from those that cause flu to others that cause illness such as hepatitis. Immunisation can protect against infection from some viruses such as seasonal flu. Viral infections are not curable by antibiotics.

Seasonal Flu: October and November marks the traditional start of the well-established flu season, with the flu virus spreading from person to person when their moisture from perspiration, speech, coughing or sneezing comes into contact with a non-infected person.

Other Respiratory Viruses: Occasionally other types of viral illnesses hit the headlines, for example, Swine Flu, Avian Flu and more recently Coronavirus. Such viruses often originate from animals and then manage to jump species to humans. As these are new diseases there is initially no specific vaccine available.

Hepatitis: The strains of virus that affect the liver are Hepatitis A, B, C, D, E, F or G, with vaccinations only available against the hepatitis A and B strain.

The Hepatitis A and E virus is spread by infected faeces contaminating food or water entering the uninfected person when eating and drinking. It can also be spread through poor hand hygiene after contact with infected faeces. In addition to the risk of viral infection, faeces also contain bacteria that causes stomach upsets if ingested.

Hepatitis B, C, D and G is spread by contact with infected blood e.g. through the sharing of needles (e.g. drugs or needles used for tattoos), or unsafe sexual acts.

Hepatitis F is a strain that is not attributed to the other strains of hepatitis.

ACTERIA: There are also many types of bacteria. Whilst our body will produce its own bacteria to help prevent infection, bacteria from other sources can cause serious infections such as bacterial meningitis or tetanus. Harmful bacterium is generally treated by anti-biotics.

Bacterial Meningitis: Can lead to meningococcal septicaemia that typically presents with a pin-prick rash that does not go away when pressed. It can occur at any age with people aged 15-24 at higher risk. It is spread by people coughing, sneezing or kissing.

Tetanus: Is caused by a bacterium called Clostridium Tetani which is found in soil and animal manure. Spores of the bacteria are picked up when a wound is contaminated by, for example, contaminated soil. A tetanus vaccine is available from your GP.

