Frequently Asked Questions
Hair Salons and Barber Shops

Q. What kinds of infections can you get from barber shops and hair salons?
A. You can get and spread blood-borne infections, such as HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C, at barber shops and hair salons. Infection prevention and control precautions must be followed to protect both personal service workers and clients.

Q. What is a blood-borne infection?
A. A blood-borne infection refers to the presence of microorganisms in blood and other bodily fluids that cause infections in humans. The most common blood-borne pathogens are Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Q. How are blood-borne infections transmitted in barber shops and hair salons?
A. Blood-borne infections can be spread in barber shops and hair salons by:
   - Reusing single-use items, such as needles or razor blades, which can’t be properly cleaned and sterilized
   - Using dirty instruments or equipment that carries infected blood or body fluids from one person to another
   - Improper cleaning and disinfection or sterilization of instruments or equipment after each client

You must be exposed to infected blood on the equipment in order for an infection to occur. Exposure means a puncture or cut with a sharp object, contact with the eyes, nose or mouth or broken skin from a cut or scratch, for example. You do not have to see blood or bodily fluids on the instruments for an infection to occur.

Q. What is Hepatitis B and how do I know if I have it?
A. Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV). Many people who are infected do not have any symptoms. Those who do however may have jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and eyes), tiredness, loss of appetite, joint pain, pain in the stomach area or nausea and vomiting.

A blood test is used to indicate the presence of or exposure to Hepatitis B virus.

A vaccine for Hepatitis B is now routinely given in Ontario to young adolescents through school-based immunization programs. It is also recommended for certain groups at high risk.
of infection with HBV. If you have more questions about the Hepatitis B vaccine, you can call the Health Unit.

Q. What is Hepatitis C and how do I know if I have it?

A. Hepatitis C is a virus (HCV) that affects the liver. Most people do not have symptoms for many years. For those who do get symptoms, the most common symptoms include tiredness, lethargy (difficulty staying awake), loss of appetite, sore muscles and joints, nausea, abdominal pain, or jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes).

A blood test indicates the presence of, or exposure to Hepatitis C virus.

There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C.

Q. What is HIV and how do I know if I have it?

A. HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. It is the virus that can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, or AIDS. Unlike some other viruses, the human body cannot get rid of HIV. That means once you have HIV you have it for life. You cannot rely on symptoms to know whether you have HIV. Many people infected with HIV do not have any symptoms at all for 10 years or more. The only way to know if you are infected with HIV is to be tested.

A blood test indicates the presence of or exposure to HIV.

There is no vaccine for HIV.

Q. Where can I get tested?

A. Your primary health care provider can order the tests needed to detect these viruses. You may visit the walk-in clinics to have the tests ordered. You can also visit the Sexual Health Clinic at the Health Unit, 681 Commercial Street, North Bay.

Q. How can I protect myself at barber shops and hair salons?

A. There are several practices to be aware of whenever you receive barber shop or hair salon services:

- Scissors, hair clippers and re-usable straight blades for cutting hair should be cleaned and disinfected using a low level disinfectant between clients.
- Clippers, trimmers, edgers and scissors that may accidentally nick or break the skin must be cleaned and disinfected with an intermediate to high level disinfectant
- Single use, disposable blades used for shaving must be discarded in an approved sharps container immediately after use
- Straight razors used for shaving must be single use or cleaned and sterilized in an autoclave between clients.
Ask your barber or hair dresser what they do to prevent infections before they provide any services.

Q. What if I see something at another barber or hair salon?
A. Please contact the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit environmental health duty inspector at 705-474-1400, ext. 2400 or 1-800-563-2808 if you have any concerns with procedures you observe at barber shops and hair salons. A Public Health Inspector will investigate your complaint.