OSHA’s Bloodborne Pathogen Standard

Your Job is Helping Others, but Sometimes Doing Your Job may put Your Own Health at Risk

One such risk is exposure to bloodborne pathogens—microorganisms such as the hepatitis virus, including hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C (HCV), and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).

Your Chance of Being Directly Exposed to Bloodborne Pathogens on the Job is Small.

But keeping that chance to an absolute minimum is so important that your employer has established a written Exposure Control Plan that follows regulations (29 CFR 1910.1030) set up by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). OSHA’s Revised Bloodborne Pathogens Standard became effective April 18, 2001.

Your Employer’s Exposure Control Program will Help You do Your Job Safely.

The program will include:

- Universal or standard precautions
- Work practices, including the use of protective clothing, that eliminates or minimizes employee exposure
- Housekeeping procedures to ensure cleanliness and sanitation
- Hepatitis B vaccinations for employees at risk. (There is no approved vaccine for Hepatitis C)
- Exposure evaluation and follow-up for exposure incidents
- Hazardous material container warnings, such as biohazard labels
- Confidential, accurate employee medical records
- Flexibility to account for innovations in procedure and technological developments (i.e., sliding sheath needles)
- Training program so that you will know how to use all these preventive controls and practices.

To Protect Yourself against HIV and Hepatitis,

Avoid direct exposure to infectious blood or body fluids—the prime transmitters of hepatitis and HIV.

HIV and Hepatitis: Understanding the Risks

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, attacks the body’s immune system, reducing its ability to fight disease.

Early AIDS symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Chronic fatigue
- Skin rashes

Later, the victim may develop unusual types of cancer or infections, including pneumonia, which the body can no longer fight off.

Some people who carry HIV have no symptoms. Others do not develop AIDS until years after they are infected. Researchers are working hard to fight AIDS and they learn more every day. But, unfortunately there is still no cure.

Your Risk of Infection is very small but Very Real

Most people you encounter in the job don’t carry HIV or hepatitis.

Most encounters with an HIV or hepatitis carrier pose no risk. AIDS and hepatitis are NOT transmitted:

- By coughing or sneezing
- By touching an infected person
- By using the same equipment, materials, toilets, showers, or water fountains as an infected person

The viruses CAN be transmitted through:

- Sexual contact
- Shared drug needles
- Needle stick injuries with infected hypodermics
- Hepatitis can also be transmitted through caked, blood and contaminated surfaces
Using Universal Precautions

Using universal precautions means treating all human blood and certain other body fluids as if they were infected with bloodborne pathogens.

Standard Precautions apply to all:
- Blood
- Body fluid, secretions, and excretions except sweat
- Semen and vaginal secretions
- Non-intact skin
- Mucous membranes

DO
- Wash hands and exposed skin with soap and water for at least 20 to 30 seconds immediately after exposure to infectious materials or after taking off gloves or other personal protective equipment.
- Use antiseptic or nonabrasive cleansers or towelettes only if washing facilities aren’t available.
- Minimize splashing, spraying, or spattering of blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- Place contaminated sharps in assigned, labeled, puncture-resistant, leak-proof containers.

DON’T
- Don’t shear or break contaminated needles or other sharps, and don’t bend recap, or remove unless specifically instructed.
- Don’t keep food or drink in work areas with potential exposure.
- Don’t eat, drink, smoke, apply cosmetics or lip balm, or handle contact lenses in work areas with exposure potential.
- Don’t pipette or suction potentially infectious materials with your mouth.

Good Housekeeping for Protection

Your employer’s written decontamination and cleaning schedule helps keep your workplace free of infection.
- Cover equipment and surfaces with plastic wrap, aluminum foil, or impervious absorbent paper. Remove and replace covering that is (or may be) contaminated.
- Clean and decontaminate all equipment and surfaces after contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- Clean and decontaminate bins, pails, and other reusable receptacles on a regular schedule and after contamination.

Cover Up for Protection

Gloves—Your first line of defense against infection:

Remember
- Replace disposable gloves after one use—right away if they are torn or contaminated.
- Choose gloves that fit tightly around the wrist if you are exposed to large amounts of blood.
- In some cases, such as in emergency rooms, double gloves are recommended.
- Change gloves between patients.
- Bandage cuts or other broken skin before putting on gloves.
- Use glove when handling or touching potentially contaminated items or surfaces.
- Wear gloves when you draw fluids or give injections.
- Remove contaminated gloves so the outsides do not touch your skin.

- **Masks and eye goggles or glasses** with solid side shields or **face shields** protect your mouth, eyes, nose, and face from splashes or spatters.
- **Gowns, aprons, lab coats, and surgical caps** protect you when a task might expose your body to contamination. Remove clothing carefully once it becomes contaminated. Then change into a spare set of work clothes.
- **Shoe covers or boots** are made for situations where there is a lot of blood or bodily fluids, or broken glass that may be contaminated.

Keep infections Under Wraps

Take special care when you collect, handle, store, or transport blood or other potentially infectious materials. Use only leak-proof containers. If the other side of the container is contaminated, place it in a second leak-proof container.

**TAKE NO CHANCES!**