

Actsafes Safety Bulletin #24

BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS AND INFECTIOUS MATERIALS

The WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 296/97 requires an employer to develop and implement an exposure control plan, if it may be reasonably anticipated that a worker may have occupational exposure to a blood borne pathogen¹ or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM)².

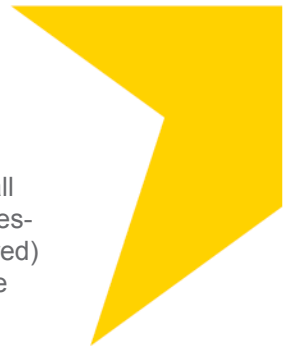
Standard Precautions is an approach to infection control. According to the concept of Standard Precautions all human blood and certain human body fluids are treated as if known to be infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV) human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and other blood borne pathogens. Standard Precautions shall be followed to prevent contact with blood or infectious materials. The following protocols should be followed when dealing with blood or bodily fluids:

1. Treat all blood and body fluids as if they are known to be infectious with HBV, HCV or HIV.
2. Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) as required including gloves, respirators, eye shields, protective gowns, disposable resuscitation devices, etc.
3. Efficient hand washing is the single most effective practice to prevent the spread of infection. Wash your hands immediately, or as soon as feasible, after removal of PPE and before and after donning gloves. When provision of hand washing facilities is not feasible, the employer shall provide either an appropriate antiseptic hand cleanser in conjunction with clean cloth/paper towels or antiseptic towelettes. When antiseptic hand cleansers or towelettes are used, hands shall be washed with soap and running water as soon as feasible.
4. Treat all needles and other sharp implements as if they are contaminated³ with infectious material.
5. Be sure that ALL biohazard waste including contaminated PPE and sharps are disposed of properly and safely (dispose of sharps in puncture-proof containers). Refer to your employer's written exposure control plan for any further details.
6. If you can reasonably be anticipated to have a harmful contact with blood or other OPIM that may result from the performance of your duties, a series of Hepatitis B vaccinations will be offered at no cost to you, upon request. If you have an Occupational Exposure⁴ or Exposure Incident⁵, report the incident immediately to your supervisor and to the designated first-aid attendant personnel. You may expect an appropriate medical evaluation at that time.

The key to protection and prevention is compliance with regulations and universal precautions. Your health and safety may depend on it!

When an employer is also acting as the evaluating health care professional and an employee refuses to consent to post-exposure evaluation and follow-up from the employer-healthcare professional, the employer should immediately make available a confidential medical evaluation and follow-up from a healthcare professional other than the exposed employee's employer.

Actsafes Safety Bulletin #24 BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS AND INFECTIOUS MATERIALS



The employer's Exposure Control Plan should address the provision of hepatitis B vaccine to all unvaccinated first aid providers who have rendered assistance in any situation involving the presence of blood or infectious materials (regardless of whether an actual exposure incident occurred) and the provision of appropriate post-exposure evaluation, prophylaxis and follow-ups for those employees who experience an exposure incident.

Endnotes:

¹"**Bloodborne Pathogens**" means pathogenic microorganisms that are present in human blood and infectious materials that can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)".

² "**Other Potentially Infectious Materials (OPIM's)**" including the following human body fluids: Semen, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pleural fluid, pericardial fluid, peritoneal fluid, amniotic fluid, saliva in dental procedures, and any other body fluid that is visibly contaminated with blood such as saliva or vomitus, and all body fluids in situations where it is difficult or impossible to differentiate between body fluids such as emergency response.

³"**Contaminated**" means the presence or the reasonable anticipated presence of blood or OPIM's on an item or surface.

⁴"**Occupational Exposure**" means reasonably anticipated harmful contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials that may result from the performance of a worker's duties.

⁵"**Exposure Incident**" means a specific eye, mouth, or mucous membrane, non-intact skin, or parenteral contact with blood or other potentially infectious material that results from the performance of an employees duties.

Resources:

Downtown Eastside Resident Association (DERA): <http://www.dtes.bc.ca>
Tel: 604.682.0931

Exposure Control Plan:
<http://firstaid.healthandsafetycentre.org/PDFs/firstaid/excontr01.pdf>

Preventing Exposure at Work:
http://www.healthandsafetycentre.org/resources/booklets/HStopics/hiv_aids.pdf