Bloodborne Pathogens Awareness

Protect Yourself

COASTAL SAFETY ENVIRONMENTAL

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Introduction

It used to be you could come to the rescue of a co-worker without much thought of your own safety. Today it’s not all that easy. Deadly diseases can stand between you and acts of heroism. Diseases such as the hepatitis C virus (HCV), hepatitis B virus (HBV) and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS. Although there are many diseases carried by blood, it’s important to know about these three.
HBV and HCV

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) are both viruses which attack the liver. Both HBV and HCV may severely damage your liver, leading to cirrhosis and even death. They are bigger threats than HIV because they’re more common bloodborne pathogens. Each year up to 6,000 people die from chronic liver disease caused by HBV. Up to 10,000 people die from chronic liver disease caused by HCV.

If you’re infected with either HBV or HCV:
- You may feel no symptoms at all.
- You may feel you have the flu.
- You may be so sick you may have to be hospitalized.
- Your blood and certain other body fluids may be infectious.

You may be vaccinated before or immediately after exposure to help prevent Hepatitis B infection. However, there’s no vaccine to help prevent Hepatitis C infection.

Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B have the same symptoms, so a blood test is necessary to tell them apart. Eighty five percent of people infected with HCV will develop chronic liver disease.

Both HBV and HCV can be transmitted by contact with blood, by sexual contact and from mother to unborn child. HCV, however, is primarily transmitted by contact with blood.

HIV

The human immunodeficiency virus attacks the body’s immune system and destroys the ability to fight infection. A person infected with HIV may simply carry the virus and seem healthy for years. Many people with HIV go on to develop AIDS, the rate is declining due to new drug treatments. As yet, there’s no vaccine to prevent AIDS and no cure.

HIV is transmitted primarily through sexual contact, but may also be transmitted by contact with blood and certain body fluids.

Who has HIV, HBV and HCV?

All kinds of people have HIV, HBV and HCV. In the United States there are about 500,000 people infected with HBV annually. There are another 40,000 infected with HIV annually. HCV infects an estimated 36,000 each year.

You can’t tell who they are by looking at them. The CDC recommends simply teaching that any one can be infected.

People can carry these diseases for many years while looking and feeling healthy. To make things worse, they may not even know they are infected. Their blood and body fluids may be highly contagious, so they unknowingly spread the diseases to others.
Health experts say the only safe thing to do is use Standard Precautions. This means treating all blood or body fluids as potentially infectious.

You can’t identify every person who may transmit infection. So you can’t afford to take any chances, since an exposure can result in infection.

The fact is, HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C are threats to your health whether you think about it or not. The better you understand the risks, the easier it is to protect yourself and your co-workers on the job.

Fortunately, HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C aren’t spread through the air the way cold or flu germs are. You won’t get either disease from working alongside someone who is infected or from casual contact.

In the workplace, bloodborne pathogens are transmitted primarily through contact with blood and body fluids containing visible blood. However, HBV, HCV, HIV and other pathogens may be present in blood, vaginal secretions, semen, and certain other body fluids.

Means of Transmission
But the virus must first get inside your body. You can become infected by:
- Sexual contact with an infected partner
- Sharing infected needles
- Accidentally cutting yourself with a sharp object that is contaminated with infected blood or body fluids
- Getting infected blood or body fluids on your skin, especially when your skin has open sores, nicks or cuts
- Getting contaminated blood or body fluids in the mucous membranes of your eyes, nose or mouth.

Who Can Be Infected?
Perhaps you’re thinking, “I don’t have to worry about HIV, Hepatitis C or Hepatitis B when my co-worker is in danger. No one I work with has either of those diseases.” Unfortunately, you have no way of knowing, so you must be concerned for your own safety.
Normally, your skin acts as a protective barrier to keep viruses out. But even tiny breaks or cracks from common skin conditions such as dermatitis, acne, chapping and broken cuticles can be doorways for the HIV, HCV or HBV viruses to enter your body.

Always remember, if you’re not trained in first aid, make as little contact as possible with the injured worker. If the injured worker is bleeding, leave on all regular personal protective equipment and get a pair of leak-proof gloves to wear underneath your work gloves. This may seem trivial, but wearing leak-proof gloves may protect you from serious illness.

If you get blood or other potentially infectious materials on your skin, immediately wash with non-abrasive soap and water. If your mucous membranes of your eyes, nose and mouth are exposed, immediately flush with running water at a sink or eyewash fountain.

If you choose to help an injured worker, focus on stopping the bleeding. Once bleeding is under control, you do not need to give further assistance.

- Stay with the injured person.
- Wait for emergency help to arrive.

Safely taking care of the accident victim is just the start of removing infectious bloodborne pathogens from your workplace. A hazardous situation will exist until:
- The entire area is cleaned of blood and body fluids.
- Contaminated cleaning equipment has been disinfected or disposed of safely.
Whenever you clean up blood or body fluids on the job:
- Wear gloves to protect your hands. It is even recommended that you wear two pairs of gloves when cleaning up after an accident. Avoid tearing your gloves on equipment.
- Put on a leak-proof apron so blood and body fluids will not get on your work clothes.
- Restrict access to the area.
- Use disposable towels to soak up most of the blood.
- Put all contaminated towels and waste in a sealed color-coded or labeled leak-proof container. Dispose of it as regulated waste.
- Clean with an appropriate disinfecting solution. After cleaning, promptly disinfect mops and other cleaning equipment. Otherwise, you may spread viruses to other areas of the facility.

Accidents are not the only times you might have to deal with blood and other potentially infectious fluids. Sometimes you may face hazards that are less obvious while performing cleaning or maintenance tasks. These hazards are just as dangerous as an accident situation.

For example, any body substance visibly contaminated with blood is potentially infectious. Wear gloves and protective equipment if you must clean surfaces soiled with any of these potentially infectious substances. These substances can be almost anywhere you have to clean such as:
- Toilets
- Sinks
- Trash.

Be Prepared
- Always wear gloves and a protective smock or apron whenever there is the slightest risk.
- Be alert for sharp objects such as broken glass or used syringes when emptying trash containers.
- Don’t pick up broken glass directly with your hands. Use a brush and dustpan.
- Place contaminated sharp objects and other contaminated wastes or cleaning materials in sturdy, puncture-resistant, leak-proof containers and dispose of them according to your company policy.
Laundry

Handling laundry can also be a risky business. People do not realize the laundry they carry may be dangerous. Bags of laundry sometimes conceal contaminated items:
- Bloody rags and clothing
- Contaminated sharps.

Remember, when handling laundry, carry it by the top. Never place your hand underneath to support it. When sorting laundry take precautions to protect yourself from the dangers within.

Common Sense Rules

Be sure to wash your hands and remove protective clothes before:
- Eating
- Drinking
- Smoking
- Applying makeup or lip balm
- Handling contact lenses.

Keep your hands away from your face, especially your nose, mouth and eyes while cleaning.

Handwashing

Handwashing is one of your best defenses against spreading infection, including HBV, HCV. and HIV. Always wash your hands with non-abrasive soap and water at the end of the shift and after removing work gloves.

Emergency Assistance

Whether your company has emergency assistance or relies on outside professionals, these people are trained to help the accident victim while protecting themselves from bloodborne diseases at the same time.

- Know what to do before an emergency occurs.
- Find out if your company has trained emergency care personnel and know how to contact them.
- Don't take unnecessary risks.
- Shut off machinery.
- Sound the alarm.
- Do whatever you must to save a life — but:
  - DO NOT touch blood or body fluids without protection.
  - DO NOT give unprotected mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.
- Wait for emergency professionals to arrive on the scene.

After the Incident

If you get blood or body fluids on your gloves, clothes or shoes, remove them as soon as possible and place them in a sealed bag. Next, wash with non-abrasive soap and water. Find out from your supervisor what company policy is for decontaminating or disposing of contaminated items.
Don’t clean up blood or body fluids unless you have been trained to do so. And be sure to follow your company’s policies to the letter.

If you do think you may have been exposed to blood or other potentially infectious material:

- Don’t panic.
- Report the incident immediately to your supervisor.
- Try to determine the source of blood or body fluid you contacted.
- Your employer can advise you about HBV vaccination, testing, counseling and any follow-up steps.

Professionals use special protective equipment. Even the goggles, gloves and dust masks you use on the job can help keep blood and body fluids off your skin and out of your eyes, nose and mouth.

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Protecting yourself from bloodborne diseases on the job requires knowing the facts, practicing good hygiene and taking a few sensible precautions. These are measures you can control. They are vitally important, so take them seriously. If you care about your job, your fellow workers and yourself, it’s worth it.
**Quiz**

1. True  False  HBV is more of a threat to you than HIV.
2. True  False  Only elderly people in cities get AIDS.
3. True  False  Standard Precautions means you must treat all blood and body fluids as potentially infectious.
4. True  False  There's no vaccine and no cure for AIDS yet.
5. True  False  You can help prevent HBV infection with a vaccination.
6. True  False  HBV and HCV have similar symptoms and both can cause chronic liver disease.
7. True  False  Tiny cuts in the skin, even dermatitis and acne, can create doorways for potentially infectious blood or body fluids to enter your body.
8. True  False  In an emergency where a co-worker is injured, you should not protect yourself against possible infection.
9. True  False  Leak-proof gloves and goggles can help protect you against infectious diseases.
10. True  False  If you get blood or body fluids on your skin, immediately wash with water and non-abrasive soap.
11. True  False  If you come into unprotected contact with blood or body fluids, always wait to see if you are infected before you tell your supervisor.
12. True  False  After an injured worker is taken care of, the danger of infection is over.
13. True  False  It is recommended that you wear a fluid-resistant apron in addition to gloves whenever cleaning blood or body fluid spills.
14. True  False  Strong soap will disinfect contaminated blood and body fluids.
15. True  False  You must disinfect mops and cleaning tools after cleaning up infectious materials.
16. True  False  Up to 10,000 people die every year from chronic liver disease caused by HCV.
17. True  False  Bags of laundry never conceal contaminated items.
18. True  False  Always carry laundry with one hand under the bag.
19. True  False  After cleaning, always wash your hands before eating, drinking, smoking, applying makeup or handling contact lenses.
20. True  False  Protecting yourself from bloodborne diseases on the job requires knowing the facts, practicing good hygiene and taking a few sensible precautions.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRAINING**

I have read and understand the training handbook, *Bloodborne Pathogens Awareness: Protect Yourself*. I have also completed and passed the comprehensive quiz at the conclusion of this handbook.

Employee’s Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Trainer’s Name ___________________________ Date ___________________________

**NOTE:** This record may be included in the employee’s personnel or training file.