

What employees should know about UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

What are Universal Precautions?

They're work practices that help prevent contact with blood and certain other body fluids.

Universal precautions are:

- **YOUR BEST PROTECTION** against AIDS, hepatitis B and some other infectious diseases
- **REQUIRED IN CERTAIN JOBS** - Universal precautions must be followed with ALL people you come in contact with, since you can't be sure who is infected.

NOTE: This information is not a substitute for federal, state or your employer's infection control guidelines.

Why Should I Know About Them?

Because universal precautions help protect:

- **EMPLOYEES** these include: correctional workers, law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, occupational health workers, funeral services workers, people responsible for giving first aid, others who may be exposed to blood or other body fluids on the job.
- **PEOPLE YOU COME IN CONTACT WITH** while doing your job. They depend on you for assistance and to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Universal precautions can help prevent illness and save lives – including your own!

HOW UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS WORK

CERTAIN INFECTIOUS DISEASES ARE CAUSED by viruses. For example:

- AIDS is caused by HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV attacks the body's natural defense against disease.
- Hepatitis B is caused by HBV (hepatitis B virus). HBV attacks the liver and can result in severe illness – even death.

HIV, HBV and SOME OTHER VIRUSES ARE SPREAD through certain body fluids, including:

- Blood (or any fluid containing visible blood)
- Semen
- Vaginal secretions
- Fluids surrounding the heart, lungs, brain, stomach, joints and tendons; fluids in the womb of a pregnant woman.

EMPLOYEES CAN BECOME INFECTED if infected blood or other body fluids enter their body through:

- a sharp injury (from a needle, razor, broken glass or any other sharp object or weapon)
- an existing cut or break in the skin
- mucous membranes (in the mouth, nose and eyes).

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS HELP PREVENT INFECTION through the use of:

- protective barriers, such as gloves, gowns, masks and goggles
- safe work practices, such as proper disposal of sharps and proper hand washing

TAKE STEPS TO PROTECT YOURSELF and others from any risks.

COVER ANY BROKEN SKIN with a bandage or dressing before going on duty. If you have a weeping skin rash or sores with a discharge, you may be required to refrain from certain job duties (unless you wear gloves and have your supervisor's OK). Ask your supervisor for details.

WEAR GLOVES any time contact with blood or other body fluids may occur. For example when:

- touching any mucous membranes or broken skin
- removing victims from wreckage, dressing wounds, inserting IVs or cleaning equipment and spills
- handling or cleaning any other items or surfaces soiled with blood or other body fluids.

Change gloves if they're torn and after contact with each person.
Do NOT reuse disposable gloves.

USE MASKS and EYE PROTECTION or protective face shields if there's any chance that blood or other body fluids may splash into your mouth, nose or eyes.

WEAR A GOWN or apron if splashing of blood or other body fluids is likely.

USE RESUSCITATION BAGS, mouthpieces, pocket masks or other ventilation devices to restore breathing.

WASH YOUR HANDS and other skin surfaces immediately after:

- direct contact with blood or other body fluids (without gloves, mask, etc.)
- removing gloves, gown or other protective clothing
- handling potentially contaminated items.

Remember – your safety depends on taking precautions with blood and other infectious body fluids of all people.

TAKE THESE PRECAUTIONS, TOO

BE CAREFUL WITH SHARPS

If you must handle, use or dispose of sharps, stay alert. Always follow proper procedures. Remember, gloves do not protect against injuries from sharps.

DISPOSE OF SHARPS PROPERLY

Do not recap, bend or break needles. Deposit a used sharp immediately after use in an approved container that is:

- closable
- puncture-resistant
- leak proof
- red or marked with the biohazard symbol. The biohazard symbol warns you about contaminated equipment and containers that hold blood or other potentially infectious materials.

Report any container that is full.

USE DISPOSABLE EQUIPMENT WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Use needles, syringes and other equipment designed to be discarded after one use. All reusable equipment must be cleaned and decontaminated (or labeled properly) according to required procedures.

CLEAN UP BLOOD AND OTHER BODY FLUIDS PROMPTLY

Always use an approved disinfectant. Clean your work surface any time it's contaminated with blood or other body fluids and after you've completed your work.

TAKE CARE OF CONTAMINATED LAUNDRY

Follow required procedures for processing contaminated laundry. Bag the laundry where it was used, in appropriately labeled or color-coded bags or containers. Use leak proof bags or containers when laundry is wet or if there's a chance for leakage.

DISPOSE OF INFECTIOUS WASTE CAREFULLY

Always follow required procedures. Check with your supervisor if you're unsure.

Be sure to wear gloves and any other necessary protective clothing to prevent contact with blood or other body fluids.

OTHER SAFEQUARDS

DON'T REACH BLINDLY when conducting a search. For example:

- Dump out trash and search with your eyes.
- Whenever possible, ask suspects to empty pockets (following appropriate departmental procedures).
- Whenever possible, ask suspects to empty pockets (following appropriate departmental procedures). Use mirrors, if possible, to search areas hidden from view.

GET HELP WITH UNCOOPERATIVE PEOPLE to prevent injuries that may put you at risk of infection.

HANDLE ALL SPECIMENS AND EVIDENCE CAREFULLY use appropriate containers and labels, according to required procedures.

ASK QUESTIONS if there's anything you don't understand and always follow safety procedures. They're designed for your protection!

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE EXPOSED to blood or other body fluids:

WASH THE EXPOSED SKIN AREA IMMEDIATELY.

Save any sharps or other items involved for possible testing. Take proper safety precautions with these items so others won't be accidentally exposed.

REPORT THE INCIDENT

Be sure to report:

- A needle stick injury or other cut or puncture
- Splashing of blood or other body fluids into your mouth eyes or nose
- Direct contact with a large amount of blood or other infectious fluids
- Prolonged contact with blood or other body fluids.

FOLLOW PRECEDURES FOR TESTING AND TREATMENT

- If you've been exposed to HBV, immune globulin and hepatitis B vaccine can help prevent infection.
- If you've been exposed to HIV, ask your physician about counseling and possible drug treatment.

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Should I be vaccinated for hepatitis B?

Yes, if your job involves reasonable potential for contact with blood or other body fluids covered by universal precautions. Ask your supervisor for details.

What should I do if a glove tears?

Remove the glove, wash your hands and replace the glove with a new one as soon as possible.

Do all gloves offer the same protection?

Because gloves vary in strength, fit, etc., you need to choose the type that's best suited to the task. Ask your supervisor for specific advice. (Remember to always wash your hands after removing gloves.)

Wipe if soap and water for hand washing aren't immediately available?

Use antiseptic towelettes or an antiseptic hand cleanser along with a clean cloth or paper towels. However, you still needs to wash your hands with soap and running water as soon as possible.

What if I don't have time for universal precautions?

You need to make time to protect yourself before performing any duty that may put you at risk. In most cases, you can predict possible exposure to blood and other body fluids. Plan to have what you need ready for emergencies.

Is it safe to donate blood?

Absolutely! Only sterile equipment is used by blood banks and blood collection centers. Needles are discarded after one use, leaving no chance of passing infected body fluids from donor to donor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact:

YOUR SUPERVISOR about specific procedures for your job.

STATE OR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT – look in your local phone book.

THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE NATIONAL AIDS HOTLINE at 1-800-342-AIDS.

It pays to be informed. You can relax and concentrate on doing your job well if you're taking steps to protect yourself and others.

So – UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS HELP PREVENT DISEASE!

TAKE PRECAUTIONS with everyone you come in contact with while doing your job.

USE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT, as required.

ALWAYS FOLLOW SAFE WORK PRACTICES.

REPORT ANY POSSIBLE EXPOSURE.

Take time to protect yourself – your health depends on it!