



BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS FACT SHEET

What are bloodborne pathogens?

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms in human blood or certain body fluids that cause disease in humans. The most common ones are the hepatitis B virus (HBV), which causes a severe form of Hepatitis in some or acts as a carrier in others, and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS.

How do you become infected?

Bloodborne pathogens may be passed on when the microorganisms enter the body through mucus membranes, through breaks in the skin or through needle sticks. In non-medical occupations, exposure is most common when an injured worker's blood contacts a co-worker rendering first aid. Practicing universal precautions and wearing the proper personal protective equipment will prevent exposure.

What are universal precautions?

Universal precautions are methods of preventing infection by treating all human body fluids as if they were contaminated and using proper personal protective equipment whenever you are required to come into contact with these fluids. Qualified, trained first-aid providers should be knowledgeable of these precautions.

What should I do to protect myself?

Personal protective equipment (PPE) includes latex gloves, gowns, mouth pieces, resuscitation bags, face masks and foot protection. Proper use can significantly reduce the health risks for exposed workers. PPE must be readily accessible to the trained employees required to use it.

Does OSH have standards for Bloodborne Pathogens?

Yes, the OSH Bloodborne Pathogens standard, 29 CFR Part 1910.1030, defines requirements to protect workers from occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens. If it is reasonably anticipated that, in the course of their normal job duties, employees could be exposed to human blood/body fluids, then they must be trained in the requirements of the standard. Some of the actions required of employers are:

- establish a written exposure control plan identifying at-risk workers
- specify means to protect and train them
- implement engineering controls
- implement work practice controls
- provide PPE and enforce its use
- offer Hepatitis B vaccination and post exposure follow-up

Where can I find additional information?

Please review our [Bloodborne Pathogens Subject Index](#) page.