

# Bloodborne Pathogens

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON THE DANGER OF BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

Bloodborne pathogens (BBPs) are infectious organisms that can cause disease in humans, including hepatitis B, C and HIV. Workers exposed to these pathogens risk serious illness or death.

**HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)** is spread through direct blood or mucous membrane contact with certain body fluids (blood, semen, pre-semen, breast milk, rectal and vaginal fluids) from a person with a HIV infection. Over time, HIV destroys T helper cells that are critical in fighting off diseases and their destruction leads to immune system failure.<sup>1</sup>



Like HIV, **Hepatitis B (HBV)** and **Hepatitis C (HCV)** are viruses that are transmitted through blood and certain body fluids. Hepatitis causes inflammation of the liver and can have several symptoms including jaundice, fever, loss of appetite, fatigue, dark urine, joint pain, abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting. Workers at risk of exposure to Hepatitis B can be vaccinated. While there is no vaccine for Hepatitis C, both HBV and HVC are curable.

An **Infection Control Program** is the best defense from workplace exposures to bloodborne pathogens. This includes assessments, education, vaccinations, personal protective equipment and universal precautions.

**Universal precautions** is an approach to infection control to treat all human blood and certain human body fluids as if they were known to be infectious for HIV, HBV and other bloodborne pathogens.<sup>2</sup>

If someone experiences a workplace exposure, they should contact their supervisor and seek immediate medical attention. A medical professional will evaluate the exposure and determine if a **post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)** is needed. This treatment significantly reduces the chances of infection and must be started within 72 hours, however, the sooner it begins, the more effective it may be. The treatment lasts 28 days and may have side effects such as a nausea and diarrhea.

<sup>1</sup>Center for Disease Control <sup>2</sup>OSHA

# EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS

OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens standard, 29 CFR 1910.1030, requires employers to:

- implement an annually reviewed written exposure control plan;
- provide engineering controls; work practices and personal protective equipment (PPE);
- make hepatitis B vaccinations available to all employees with occupational exposure to blood-borne pathogens within 10 days of assignment;
- provide post-exposure evaluation and follow up to any worker who experiences an exposure incident - at no cost to the worker;
- use labels and signs to communicate hazards;
- provide information and annual training to employees;
- maintain employee medical and training records including a Sharps Injury Log.

If an employee has an exposure incident while acting as a Good Samaritan (not in the course of their assigned job duties), the employer is **not** required by the bloodborne pathogens standard to provide post exposure follow up, although OSHA encourages employers to do so.

## NEEDLE STICK PROTOCOL

**Treat all used needles as contaminated; diseases can spread through needle pokes.**

**Never pick up a needle with you bare hands; wear gloves.**

**Wear closed-toe shoes to protect your feet.**

**Use a tool like tongs to pick up needles.**

**Don't discard needles in the trash. Use a sharps container or a closable hard plastic container.**

**Put the sharps container on a stable surface next to the needle. Avoid walking a far distance carrying a used needle.**

**Do not hold the container in your hand while placing needles inside it.**

**Pick up the needle with the point facing away from you and place it in the container on the ground point down.**

**Remove gloves carefully to avoid contact with contaminated fluid.**

**Wash hands well afterwards.**

## IF YOU ARE STUCK BY A NEEDLE

**Follow the Exposure Control Plan.**

**Report it to the employer.**

**The employer must provide immediate medical attention.**

**Preventive drug treatment for exposure to HIV should begin within 2 hours of the incident.**

**For more information and resources visit:**

**[www.cseany.org/safety](http://www.cseany.org/safety)**



CSEA has been winning the fight for safe and healthy working conditions for over 100 years, yet there is more to be done. Hazards old and new- from Asbestos to Zika- remain a threat to workers every day. CSEA will not back down from the fight and nothing is more important than saving lives and keeping workers free from injury. Your help is needed now more than ever.

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