



## **BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS**

### **What are bloodborne pathogens?**

Bloodborne pathogens are disease-causing germs mainly found in the blood, but may also be found in other body fluids. The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), Hepatitis B (HBV) and Hepatitis C (HCV), are the most common and serious blood pathogens. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS; Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C are viruses that attack the liver.

All of these viruses can enter the body in several ways, such as through a break in the skin and/or through the mucous membranes, which is the moist skin lining of the eye or mouth. They can also be transmitted through sexual contact. These pathogens are NOT passed from one person to another through food or water. Nor are they passed by kissing, coughing, sneezing, or contact with stool.

### **How can bloodborne pathogens spread at work, home or elsewhere?**

Bloodborne pathogens are spread through contact with infected blood or other body fluids. Specific ways the pathogens may enter the body include:

- \* A puncture or cut in the skin from sharp object that is contaminated by the virus. Sharp objects may include: needles, broken glass or knives.
- \* When a person's hands touch contaminated surfaces and then touch their eyes, nose, mouth or breaks in the skin. A break in the skin may be caused from an abrasion, eczema or acne.
- \* Direct exposure with infected blood such as splashing into the eye or mouth, after an injury, or from bites or scratches that break the skin and introduce infected blood or body fluids.
- \* Close physical contact with an infected partner

### **How can I reduce my risk from bloodborne pathogens?**

There is a vaccine to protect against Hepatitis B. Currently, there are no vaccines for HIV and Hepatitis C. The best way to protect against exposure to bloodborne pathogens is to *always* follow "Standard Precautions" - **All human blood, any body fluid containing blood, or any other body fluid should be treated as if they are known to be infectious.** In other words, treat all used needles or other sharp instruments, soiled tissues, bandages and open wounds as potentially hazardous. Many individuals who are infected with these diseases show no signs of illness and are unaware that they are infected. There is no legal obligation for an infected person to inform his or her employer or co-workers.

Common sense and healthy choices can prevent or reduce the risk of exposure to bloodborne illness. In general, be aware of activities which put you at possible risk of coming in contact with infected blood or body fluids.

## **IMPORTANT TIPS TO REMEMBER:**

- Practice frequent and thorough **handwashing!**
- Antibacterial gels should NOT replace the use of soap and water. Use those products only when running water and soap is not available.
- Wear gloves when attending to an injury that involves an open and bleeding wound. If gloves are not available, use a tissue, a towel, wash cloth or other appropriate item to provide a barrier between your hands and the victim's blood.
- Dispose of soiled bandages or materials in a closed-lid waste container.
- Keep work and living areas clean. Use commercial cleaning products that are effective against viruses or diluted bleach solution (1/4c household bleach in 1 gallon of water) to clean/disinfect tables, desks, door knobs, water faucets and/or other bathroom fixtures. It is important to read and follow the label directions on store-bought products. New homemade cleaning solutions should be made daily!
- Do not share personal items, such as razors or toothbrushes.
- Do not pre-chew food for babies.
- Do not share chewing gum or cigarettes
- Avoid unprotected sex. Condoms can provide protection if used correctly.
- Avoid casual sex with multiple partners.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**SCHD Communicable Disease Unit 330-375-2662**  
**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)**  
**Occupational Safety and Health Association [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)**