



Community Health Connections

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Fact Sheet

Universal Precautions

What are Universal Precautions?

Blood and other body fluids (i.e., semen, vaginal fluids, saliva, urine, feces, vomit) can contain viruses and bacteria that can be passed on to another person through direct contact. Hepatitis B & C and HIV are diseases that can be transferred from one person to another through contact with infected blood and/or body fluids. Since there is no way to know without testing if a person has hepatitis B or C or HIV, it is recommended that you treat all body fluids as though they were infected.

Universal Precautions are actions that you take to place a barrier between yourself and potentially infected body fluids

How are blood and body fluids passed from one person to another?

- Through open areas on the skin
- By splashing in the eye
- Through the mouth
- Unprotected sex (oral, anal and vaginal)
- Injury with contaminated needles or other sharps
- Prenatally (mother to baby) and during delivery

How can I protect myself from blood and body fluids?

The easiest way to protect yourself from blood and body fluids is to have the injured person treat their own wound. If they are unable to take care of themselves, or they need some help, use latex gloves. If you do not have disposable gloves available, use a plastic bag (trash, shopping, or sandwich) over your hands to create a barrier. Your employer must provide appropriate personal protective equipment (gloves, goggles, disinfectant, etc.) for your use while at work. Know where these items are located so that you will be better prepared to protect yourself.

How do I safely handle a bleeding injury?

1. Hold an absorbent material to the wound – a clean disposable diaper offers a good absorbent material with the added protection of a plastic backing. You can also use paper towels, tissue, or newspaper.
2. Hold with pressure until the bleeding stops.
3. Place a Band-Aid or bandage over the wound if needed
4. Dispose of bloody material in a plastic lined trashcan or sealed plastic bag.
5. Everyone should wash his/her hands with soap and running water as soon as possible (hand sanitizers or hand sanitizing towelettes may be used if soap and running water are not available).

How do I clean surfaces that have blood and body fluids on them?

1. WEAR DISPOSABLE GLOVES.
2. Wash the area with soap and water and then dry the area.
3. Disinfect the surface with a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water, or use a hospital-strength disinfectant, e.g., Lysol. Allow the area to remain wet for at least 3 minutes before drying. Consult the container label for directions specific to that product.
4. Use disposable cleaning materials if possible, such as paper towels instead of cloth.
5. Dispose of cleaning materials and gloves in a sealed plastic bag.
6. Wash hands with soap and running water (hand sanitizer or hand sanitizing towelettes may be used if soap and running water are not available).

Information in this fact sheet was supplied by the Washtenaw County Public Health Department.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not intended to replace consultation with a health care provider.