Bloodborne Pathogens (ECP)

What are bloodborne pathogens?

A pathogen is a virus, bacteria, or other microorganism that can cause disease. Bloodborne pathogens are pathogens present in blood that can cause disease in humans. Examples of bloodborne pathogens include hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS.

How are bloodborne pathogens different from other infectious diseases?

A key difference is how the pathogen is transmitted from person to person. Bloodborne pathogens are transmitted from exposure to the blood or other certain body fluids from an infected person. This differs from other pathogens, such as influenza virus or SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID, that can be transmitted from exposure to respiratory droplets.

What other body fluids can carry bloodborne pathogens?

Other potentially infectious materials (OPIM) that can carry bloodborne pathogens include body fluids such as semen, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid (fluid in brain and spine), pleural fluid (fluid in the lining of the lungs), amniotic fluid, and saliva in dental procedures.

Urine, feces, nasal secretions, sputum, tears, vomit, and saliva are not considered to be OPIM unless there is visible blood in them.

How do I protect myself from bloodborne pathogens?

Follow universal precautions to protect yourself from bloodborne pathogens. Universal precautions means to assume that all blood and OPIM is infectious. Implement the following control measures to protect yourself from exposure to blood and OPIM:

Engineering Controls

- Use needleless delivery systems or needles with engineered injury protection whenever possible (i.e., intranasal NARCAN, epinephrine auto-injectors).
- Use leak-proof, puncture-resistant, sharps containers with tight-fitting lids.

Hand Washing and Hygiene Practices

- Wash hands with soap and running warm water immediately when there is a known or suspected exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- Wash hands after removing gloves when handling blood or other potentially infectious materials
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, apply cosmetics or lip balm, handle contact lenses, or touch eyes, nose, or mouth in areas where there is a potentially for exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials.

Sharps Handling and Disposal

- Dispose of needles and other sharps immediately after use.
- Never recap, bend, or break needles.
- Never pick up sharps with your hands, even when wearing gloves. Use tongs, forceps, or a dustpan and broom.
- Never leave needles or sharps on a work surface.

- Never dispose of sharps in the regular trash, even un-used sharps.
- Position sharps containers as close to the work area as possible. Bring a sharps container to the location of use if one is not available.
- Never reach into a sharps container. Do not fill sharps containers beyond ¾ full.
- Place full sharps containers into Hazardous Waste Boxes. Contact EHS for disposal.

Personal Protective Equipment

- Wear gloves and safety glasses whenever there is a potential exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- Double glove if hand contact is expected.
- Wear a face mask or face shield if there is a splash risk.
- Wear a disposable gown, coveralls, or lab coat if contact with clothing is expected.
- Wear disposable booties if shoe contamination is expected.
- Use a pocket mask or other barrier device when performing CPR.

Spill Clean-Up Procedure

- Isolate the area to minimize exposure to people in the area.
- Gather the needed clean-up supplies (disinfectant, absorbent material, PPE).
- Put on required PPE.
- Use tongs, forceps, or dustpan and brush to pick up broken glass or other sharps.
- Cover the spill with absorbent material such as paper towels or absorbent powder.
- Slowly pour the disinfectant on the absorbent material and saturate the material completely.
- Allow the disinfectant to soak the area for at least 20 minutes or the duration of the contact time on the manufacturer label.
- Place the absorbent material in a biohazard bag.
- Clean spill area again with disinfectant and dispose of materials in biohazard bag.
- Carefully remove PPE to prevent direct skin contact. If body fluid on PPE, place disposable PPE in biohazard bag. If no body fluid, PEE can go into regular trash. Soak reusable PPE and equipment (i.e., safety glasses, tongs) in disinfectant solution.
- Wash hands with soap and water.
- Place biohazard items in Biohazard Receptacles.
- Contact EHS for disposal of waste.

Am I required to get a hepatitis B vaccine?

If you may come into contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials as part of your job, you are eligible to receive the hepatitis B vaccine series at no cost. You may choose to accept of decline the vaccine. If you decline the vaccine, you will be required to complete the Hepatitis B Vaccine

Declination Form. You may initially decline the vaccine and choose to accept it at a later date. Employees are encouraged to submit Hepatitis B Immunization vaccine record due to risk of blood exposure. Contact the Occupational Heath Center to schedule your vaccine series.

Occupational Health Center: West Chester
915 Old Fern Hill Rd #3, West Chester, PA 19380
(610) 738-2450

What happens if I am exposed to blood or other potentially infectious materials?

- Immediately wash exposed skin with soap and warm water and flush eyes or mucous membranes using an eyewash or running water. Immediately notify your supervisor and/or EHS and seek medical attention at the Occupational Health Center during working hours or a local emergency room after hours.

Where can I get more information?

Contact EHS at 610-436-3333 for more information about the Bloodborne Pathogens Program.