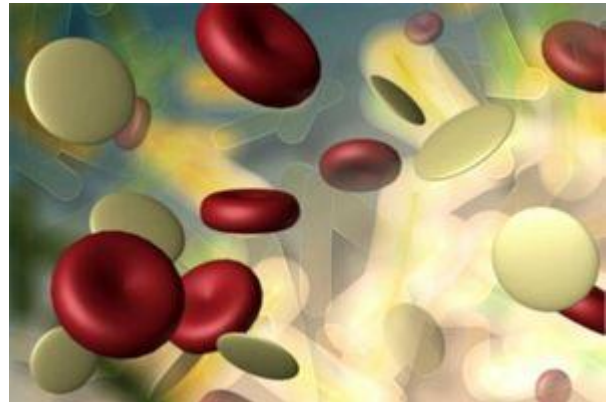


Blood Borne Pathogens

Blood borne pathogens are diseases and germs spread through blood or blood-containing materials such as saliva, vomit or sneeze droplets. Although people who come in contact with contaminated blood may not experience short-term illnesses or symptoms, these diseases can sometimes lead to death if not identified and treated as soon as possible.



What are blood borne pathogens?

Blood borne pathogens include hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Some of the symptoms and long-term effects of hepatitis B and C include:

- Yellowing of the skin or whites of eyes
- Feeling tired
- Pain in abdomen
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Damage to the liver

It's also important to note that exposure to blood borne pathogens doesn't automatically mean you'll become sick. If a small amount of a pathogen comes into contact with your blood, your body may be able to fight it off. However, it's still important to seek proper medical care to reduce your risk of sickness.

How do blood borne pathogens spread?

Blood borne pathogens can spread via blood or blood-containing materials such as saliva, vomit or sneeze droplets. To spread, blood and blood-containing materials don't necessarily have to be on a live object. They can also be on furniture, walls or other objects commonly found in the workplace. The two most common ways for blood borne pathogens to enter the body are:

1. being punctured with a needle, razor blades, broken glass or other sharp objects that has come into contact with infected blood, or
2. blood-containing materials coming in contact with an individual's eyes, nose, mouth or another opening or cut in his or her skin.

Environments that are most exposed are healthcare professionals and the general public. Working in retail brings you in contact with the general public and can also put you at risk for being exposed to blood borne pathogens and even contracting blood borne diseases in the workplace if proper prevention measures aren't taken.

Because you can't tell simply by looking at a person's blood if he or she is infected with blood borne pathogens, you must exercise "universal precautions," which means treating all blood and blood-containing materials as though they do actually contain blood borne pathogens.



Prevention includes; regular hand washing, wearing protective clothing such as latex gloves when dealing with an injured person, avoid poking yourself with the needle from tagging guns, being careful with box knives, cleaning up broken glass so that no blood is drawn. You need to take care when handling garbage bags while performing regular custodial duties, as sharp objects can protrude from the bag. These are ways to prevent the transmission of BBP's.

Basics to follow for occupational exposure include:

- If possible allow injured person to cleanse their own wounds whenever possible.
- Always wear gloves when giving first aid for wounds.
- The following are proper techniques for glove removal:
 1. With both hands gloved, peel one glove off from top to bottom and hold it in the gloved hand.
 2. With the exposed hand, peel the second glove from the inside, tucking the first glove inside the second.
 3. Dispose of gloves promptly in an appropriate container.
 4. Be sure to never touch the outside of the used glove with bare skin.
 5. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water as soon as possible after removing gloves.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after using an antiseptic hand cleaner or towel-ettes if soap and water were not immediately available, and after removing other personal protective clothing or equipment.
- Immediately wash hands or other involved body area after accidental contact with blood or other body fluids.
- Wear personal protective clothing or equipment if contact with blood or body fluids is anticipated.
- Call the custodian to clean up blood, body fluids or other potentially infectious materials.
- Follow guidelines for cleaning and decontaminating equipment and environmental surfaces.
- Follow guidelines for proper disposal of waste.
- Wear gloves when emptying waste receptacles.
- Place regulated waste in appropriate containers.