

# Bloodborne Pathogens

The bloodborne pathogens program was originally intended for workers in hospitals but has since grown to cover any and all employees who could possibly face blood while performing their job duties.

This section is covered under the applicable regulation 29 CFR 1910.1030.

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms found in blood or other body fluids that can cause disease in people. One type is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. Some people can have HIV for years without symptoms. If it does become AIDS, however, it is a very serious, often fatal, illness, even with the new medicines that have been developed.

Other pathogens are hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C (HCV) viruses. These viruses affect the liver and greatly increase the risk of a person developing other potentially fatal liver diseases, such as cirrhosis and cancer.

Fortunately, these pathogens exist only in blood and other bodily fluids, and the illnesses are not transmitted by casual contact like using public facilities, being in the same room with an infected person, or being coughed or sneezed on by an infected person.

The most common means of transmitting these illnesses are sexual contact, sharing drug needles, being stuck with a needle or other sharp instrument that is already infected, and direct contact with infected body fluids and broken skin.

Exposure to human blood occurs most commonly in healthcare facilities - although other people may have occupational exposure also. There are several work areas across the MGC campuses where people are prone to bloodborne pathogens. These areas include physical science laboratories, the art department, plant operations, and the athletic department.

Workers who may be exposed to blood or other body fluids follow what are known as "universal precautions." This means treating all blood and body fluids as if they are infected. It means wearing gloves or other personal protective equipment if they could be exposed to blood or body fluids. To get proper protection from PPE, it should be inspected before every use, be removed carefully to avoid accidental contact with the blood or fluid, and should be disposed of in special containers. It's important for workers to wash hands thoroughly after removing PPE - it is a very simple step for added protection. If soap and water are not available, they should use antiseptic hand cleaners as soon as possible after contact with potentially infectious materials.

Workers using needles, knives, or other "sharps" that could puncture the skin need to take extra precautions. Dispose of sharps immediately after use in properly marked containers. Use the safest instruments possible and never recap needles. Use extra caution when transferring blood or other body fluids from a syringe to a specimen container. Never reach a hand into a sharps

container. Never clean up broken glass or other sharp material by hand; use tongs or a brush and pan.

Take commonsense precautions where blood might be present. No eating, drinking, or smoking. Don't keep food or drinks where blood or other potentially infectious materials are present. Don't apply makeup, lip balm, or insert contact lenses. Make sure any broken skin areas or abrasions are covered. Never suction any particular infected fluid by mouth.

Whether or not you are likely to have occupational exposure to blood, everyone should know the basics about the hazards of bloodborne pathogens. Since they present the possibility of such serious illnesses as HIV infection or hepatitis B or hepatitis C viruses, anyone exposed to blood or other body fluids should protect himself or herself from direct contact.