

Bloodborne Pathogens

Infection Control

Handwashing

Washing your hands after handling blood or body fluids is critical in preventing the spread of BBPs. When washing your hands, follow these steps:

- Use soap and warm water
- Scrub vigorously for at least 20 seconds
- Use a single-use towel or air blower to dry

Handwashing Tip:

If you're not sure how long 20 seconds is, try signing "Happy Birthday" to yourself two times. That's about 20 seconds.

If you don't have immediate access to handwashing facilities, you can use hand sanitizers or moist towelettes. But, remember these are not a substitute for proper handwashing. You must still wash your hands with soap and water as soon as possible.

Universal Precautions

Taking universal precautions whenever there is a potential for a BBP exposure is essential for preventing the spread of BBPs. That means you should always protect your hands, face, and body when working around sources of BBPs. Disposable nitrile, rubber, or latex gloves; goggles; face shields; and protective clothing all are ways you can avoid exposure to BBPs.

When handling sharps, such as hypodermic needles or sharp items, that may be contaminated with blood, it's best not to handle them with your bare hands. Use tongs, pliers, broom and dust pan, or any other means that will protect your hands.

Remember, always dispose of sharps in a sharps container. Sharps containers must be:

- Rigid
- Puncture resistant
- Leak proof
- Portable
- Labeled
- Closable and sealable



Decontamination

Sometimes you may be asked to clean-up a spill. If this happens, spray the area with an EPA-rated germicide or a 10% bleach solution and allow to stand for 10 minutes after the initial clean-up. Dispose of wipes or towels used in the clean-up process in bio-hazard containers.

Regulated Medical Waste

It's imperative that contaminated sharps or contaminated items that could release blood or OPIMs are disposed of in an appropriate manner. These items must be taken to a facility, such as a local hospital or medical facility, for proper disposal.

Hepatitis B Vaccinations

One way you can protect yourself from acquiring the hepatitis B virus is to get a hepatitis B vaccination. This vaccination is considered to be safe and effective in controlling the virus. The vaccination is a series of three shots administered over a six-month period. There may be some minor side effects for the shot, such as soreness, swelling, or redness at the injection site, but the long-term benefits certainly outweigh the short-term discomfort.

If the duties and activities of your job expose you to bloodborne pathogens, your employer is required to offer you the vaccination at no cost to you. You may refuse your employer's offer, but if you do, you must sign a declination form. If you change your mind at a later date and decide you do want the vaccination, your employer must provide it to you at no cost.