

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Good Health within reach ..

What precautions should I take for self protection?

If you must assist an injured person where blood/body fluids are involved, you should practice precautions. You should place a barrier between you and the other person's potentially infectious body fluids (Universal Precautions).

Why are these precautions important?

There are two major diseases that can be transferred from blood/body fluids: Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS. It is impossible to know if an individual may have one of these diseases so it is advisable to treat everyone the same, as though their blood/body fluids could transmit disease.

How is blood/body fluids passed from one person to another person?

These are the ways that blood body fluids may be passed:

- through open areas on the skin
- by splashing in the eye or nose
- through the mouth

How should I handle an incident with blood/body fluids?

1. WEAR DISPOSABLE LATEX GLOVES when handling blood/body fluids directly (cuts, bites, nosebleeds or contaminated surface/equipment). Latex gloves are usually available at drug stores. However, you can use plastic sandwich/storage bags, plastic car trash bags or plastic bread bags in case you do not have access to gloves. Appropriate personal protective equipment must be provided by your employer while you are at work.
2. Use a large pad of clean cloth or other absorbent material (tissues, napkins, paper towels, clothing, newspapers) to minimize the possibility of the blood/body fluids soaking through to you skin. Encourage the other person to help take care of him/herself if possible. Even young children can hold tissues under their nosebleed, while you put on your gloves. Or, they can apply an absorbent pad to an injury while you put on your gloves.
3. Cover the area with a bandage, if possible, once the bleeding has stopped. This will minimize further exposure to other individuals.

4. If a surface is contaminated with blood/body fluids (floor, table tops, sink, etc.) KEEP YOUR GLOVES ON and mop up the fluid with disposable absorbent material (tissues, napkins, paper towels), then wash the area with soap and water. Next use an approved disinfectant which should be bactericidal. You can make your own solution of 1 part chlorine bleach to 10 parts water; this solution is only effective for 24 hours so it must be made up fresh every day. Dispose of cleaning materials and gloves in a sealed plastic bag.
5. WASH YOUR HANDS, as soon as possible, with soap and water. Use lots of scrubbing motions to remove any disease germs from your skin.

Remember the idea is to put a barrier or protective layer between you and the blood/body fluids. Reassure the individual that you are trying to protect both of you from each other's germs. You will not only be a care giver, but also an excellent role model by following the above steps.

Your employer should have a Bloodborne Pathogen Policy and Procedure Manual. Make sure you are aware of where it is located and be familiar with the contents.

For more information: call Nurse Line 734-484-7200

Washtenaw County Department of Human Services Public Health Division (Rev. 5/93)