

Bloodborne Pathogens

Bloodborne pathogens (BBP) are infectious, disease-causing microorganisms in blood and bodily fluids. The most common BBPs are Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV), and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), but others include malaria, and syphilis.

Potential means of exposure and transmission of BBPs include:

- Accidental puncture from contaminated needles, broken glass, or other sharps;
- Contact between broken/damaged skin or mucous membranes (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth) and contaminated bodily fluids;
- Sexual contact with someone who has a BBP; and
- Sharing of contaminated needles.

While workers in certain professions (e.g., first responders, healthcare workers) are at a higher risk than most for exposure to BBP, anyone who is cleaning up bodily fluids (e.g., blood, vomit), administering first aid, or exposed to another means of exposure has the potential contract a BBP.

Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

Preparation is Key: Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to review potential bloodborne pathogen exposures in your work area, and discuss how the hazards can be avoided.

Stay Positive: Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

Share a Story, Ask for a Story: Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

Universal Precautions

The best line of defense against BBP is adopting universal precautions for infection control, which means treating all blood and bodily fluids as if they were known to be infectious with BBPs. To prevent potential infection, follow these guidelines:

- Avoid direct contact (e.g., administering first aid without proper PPE) or indirect contact (e.g., picking up used needles or soiled gauze without proper PPE) with anyone else's blood and bodily fluids.
- Always wear disposable gloves when providing first aid care, and ensure you remove them without contacting the soiled part of the gloves and dispose of them immediately in a proper container.
- Use additional PPE as needed for protection (e.g., eye protection, shoe coverings, gowns, breathing barriers).
- Dispose of sharps (e.g., needles) in designated sharps containers immediately after use.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth during and after providing first aid care or cleaning up bodily fluids.
- Thoroughly wash your hands and any other potentially exposed body parts immediately after exposure to potentially contaminated bodily fluids.

In addition, certain BBPs can still be infectious for days outside the body. For example, HBV can live in dried blood for up to 7 days. Any surfaces or tools that bodily fluids on them need to be properly cleaned and disinfected prior to being cleared to be used again.

Talk to your supervisor to discuss enrolling in [first aid, CPR, and AED training](#). Complete the [Bloodborne Pathogens](#) training on myHR Learn to learn more about BBP, and always follow universal precautions to reduce your potential exposure to BBP.



Report all injuries on Risk Management's [website](#) or call (847) 491-5582.

Learn more: Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [website](#) for more information.

Safety at Home

Below are some tips to help prevent exposure to bloodborne pathogens, germs, and viruses while at home:

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially upon arrival at home after being out in public.
- Ensure you not only clean, but also disinfect, surfaces to prevent the spread of viruses and bacteria. Pay special attention to frequently-touched surfaces (e.g., door handles) and surfaces in the kitchen.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who may be ill, and self-isolate from others if you are ill.

For additional information, contact Gwen Butler, Director, Environmental Health and Safety, at (847) 491-4936.