

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS IN THE WORKPLACE

Purpose

In the event of an emergency, are you prepared to lend a helping hand? Workplace accidents, automobile accidents, injuries at home or during recreation can expose you to serious diseases, such as AIDS or Hepatitis B. What can you do about it? Do you standby and watch? Do nothing? What? The answer is to be armed with knowledge and information about blood pathogens, then take the necessary precautions to protect yourself from potential hazards.

Please keep in mind, this training is not designed to list all potential hazards, nor is it designed to serve as a comprehensive training program related to AIDS or Hepatitis B. Each organization is responsible for developing their own policies and procedures relating to bloodborne pathogens, and for following local, state, and federal regulations and standards. Each organization must refer to their own medical and legal advisors for specific information to develop policies and procedures. This training provides basic information about potential bloodborne pathogen hazards and how you may avoid the risks.

Hazard Awareness

Much of the information about AIDS is well publicized, particularly among those persons working in the Health Care field, Dentistry, Emergency Medical personnel and Police. The risk goes much farther. Your exposure to these diseases can occur in a matter of seconds, anywhere, at home, at work, or on the highway. Let's assume a co-worker is injured and needs emergency first aid. What do you do? Do you rush in and put a bandage over the bleeding wound? Do you wait for medical assistance? After this training, you will be able to help your co-worker and minimize the risk of infection to yourself.

Auto Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

Each of us has an immune system that helps fight off diseases and infections. The AIDS virus decreases the ability of the immune system to function properly. If you catch a cold, your body goes into action to fight the virus. Some people have better immune systems than other, so some people catch fewer colds than other, or recover from the effects of bacteria or virus infections faster. Viruses are incapable of living alone. In order to survive and reproduce, they must use other healthy cells in your body. He Human

Immunodeficiency Virus, HIV, is the AIDS causing virus. Once the HIV enters the bloodstream, it sticks to certain cells. These cells begin taking direction from the HIV virus, creating new viruses. The AIDS virus directly attacks the cells that are meant to fight disease. As a result, an AIDS victim becomes susceptible to diseases, which a healthy person can usually fight off.

The Hepatitis B virus also affects the immune system, but the virus itself does not have a direct effect on the immune system, as does the AIDS virus. Currently, there is not a vaccine to immunize against the AIDS virus; however, there are passive and active immunizations for Hepatitis B. You probably will not be immunized against Hepatitis B, unless you work in a health care setting.

Bloodborne Pathogens

The words “bloodborne pathogens” are the key words when discussing how these diseases are transmitted. A bloodborne pathogen is a very small organism that is carried, reproduced and spread in blood or blood products and is capable of causing disease. The HIV virus has been found in blood, semen, vaginal secretions, saliva, tears, breast milk, urine, and other body fluids. HIV has been isolated in blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and possibly breast milk. Hepatitis B virus is transmitted in much the same way, so follow the

hints in this training to protect yourself from exposure. Basically, to help reduce exposures, all body fluids should be treated as if contaminated with blood.

We've identified some of the potential hazards and want you to know they affect everyone, no matter where you work. Whenever you provide assistance to an injured person, you won't know if that person has had AIDS or Hepatitis. You have to protect yourself as much as possible in the event you could be exposed to the virus through contact with a body fluid carrying a bloodborne pathogen.

Personal Protective Equipment

There seems to be a reluctance to use personal protective equipment, but remember the viruses are here, we can't tell who has them, and we want you to stay protected. Masks prevent exposure to mucous membranes of the mouth and nose from droplets or splashes of blood and body fluids. Proper wearing of the mask is as important as the mask itself. Wear protective eyewear or a face shield when splashes of blood or body fluids may contaminate the eyes, mouth, or nose. Splashes of infected fluids in the eye can cause the disease to be transmitted through tears. Gloves are extremely important. Each organization must provide proper gloves and train everyone how to use them. Latex gloves are not

puncture or tear resistant, so be sure that the selected glove provides the wearer with the desired protection. Never reuse the gloves after they have come in contact with a bloodborne pathogen.

Hygiene and Housekeeping

Personal hygiene and housekeeping are the very important steps to protect you and others from contacting the deadly viruses. Wash your hands frequently when in restrooms, cafeterias, or other public places. Be sure cleaning persons understand how to clean and how to sanitize. Cleaning is accomplished by washing and scrubbing with detergents. Sanitizing is the process of killing harmful bacteria by using germicides or sanitizing agents. *One cup* of liquid household bleach in a gallon of tap water makes a good sanitizing agent.

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

Mouth to mouth resuscitation is potentially hazardous, as direct mucous membrane contact is normally required. You can reduce this hazard by using mouthpieces, resuscitation bags or other ventilation devices. When practicing CPR, be sure to clean and sanitize the mannequins after each student has used it.

Needle Sticks

One of the most potentially hazardous areas to contact the viruses is from a needle prick. Police Officers, fire rescue workers, prison guards, and persons in a wide range of activities are susceptible to accidentally getting stuck with a contaminated needle. When working with blood covered clothing or personal items, searching a trunk, or even walking along the beach, it is possible to get stuck with an infected needle.

Avoid the Hazard

The moral of the story is simply this: The AIDS virus is here, and there's no known cure. The Hepatitis virus is here, and it's dangerous. The exposures are real. The only prevention you have is to exercise caution, use common sense, and follow your organization's policies regarding bloodborne pathogens. Wearing personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, and eye/face protection will go a long way to

reduce the potential hazards of AIDS and Hepatitis B in your workplace. Take care; live long and healthily!