



Frequently asked questions about Universal Precautions

From the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

What is 'Universal Precautions'?

According to the Centers for Disease Control, universal precautions refer to "a set of precautions designed to prevent transmission of HIV, hepatitis B virus (HBV), and other blood borne pathogens when providing first aid or health care. Under universal precautions, blood and certain body fluids of all patients are considered potentially infectious for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B virus and other blood borne pathogens." By following certain steps, individuals limit their risk of becoming infected with diseases that can be transmitted to others through exposure to body fluids.

Which Body Fluids Are Covered By Universal Precautions?

- blood
- bodily fluids containing visible blood
- semen
- vaginal fluid
- cerebrospinal (brain and spine)
- fluids from joints, fluids found in sacs that surround major organs and amniotic fluids

Which Body Fluids Are Not Covered By Universal Precautions?

- feces
- nasal secretions
- sputum
- sweat
- tears

What Should I Do If I Come Across Body Fluids?

Anytime you come in contact with body fluids that may contain blood, please be careful to do the following:

- **Use personal protective equipment** to keep blood from splashing on you, such as:
 - ✓ Gloves
 - ✓ CPR Mask (if CPR is needed)
 - ✓ Facemask and/or Eye Protection
 - ✓ Gown

- **Wash your hands** with soap and warm water or with a hand sanitizer. Be sure to wet your hands, soap and lather up for at least ten seconds, washing and scrubbing under the nails and cuticle. Rinse thoroughly and dry.
- **Dispose of sharp objects** in a puncture proof container (Sharps Container)
- **Dispose of any contaminated items** using a red Bio-hazard bag, appropriately marked for easy identification.

What Are Some Tips For Cleaning Blood And Body Fluids?

When cleaning and decontaminating blood-contaminated areas, do the following:

- **Wear** gloves and **use** disposable towels or other means of cleaning that will stop direct contact between you and the blood or body fluids.
- **Decontaminate** the area with an approved germicide or a 1:100 solution of household bleach (that is, dilute 1 part bleach with 99 parts water).
- **Wash and disinfect** all the equipment used when you were cleaning.
- **Discard** all soiled cleaning materials in a leak-proof plastic bag. Dispose of this bag according to local/public health regulations for the disposal of infectious waste.
- **Wash hands** thoroughly with warm water and soap, after removing gloves.
- **Change gloves** after each task or exposure.
- **Dispose of your used gloves** as you would for contaminated materials.

How Should Contaminated Laundry Be Handled?

Contaminated laundry shall be handled as little as possible with a minimum of agitation.

Contaminated laundry shall be bagged or containerized at the location where it was used and shall not be sorted or rinsed in the location of use. Other requirements include:

- Contaminated laundry shall be placed and transported in bags or containers labeled so that other staff can easily recognize the containers as requiring compliance with Universal Precautions.
- Whenever contaminated laundry is wet and presents a reasonable likelihood of soak-through or leakage from the bag or container, the laundry shall be placed and transported in bags or containers which prevent soak-through and/or leakage of fluids to the exterior.
- Staff who has contact with contaminated laundry should wear protective gloves and other appropriate personal protective equipment.

For more information about hand washing and other important health information, visit us on the web:

www.bhsj.org

Or call your local Health Department office at:

Coldwater
279-9561 x 141

Hillsdale
437-7395 x 110

Three Rivers
273-2161 x 241