

Bloodborne Pathogens (BBP)

Bloodborne pathogens (BBPs) are microorganisms that cause disease. BBPs are transmitted through contact with infected blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM).

Assume that all blood and OPIM are contaminated and handle them accordingly.

The three BBPs that pose the greatest risk in your workplace are the hepatitis B virus, the hepatitis C virus and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). There is NO CURE for hepatitis B or HIV.

Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C

Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver. The two forms that pose the biggest threat in the workplace are hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Hepatitis B and hepatitis C symptoms include:

- Flu-like symptoms
- Jaundice (yellow skin, mucous membranes or eyes)
- Weakness
- Lack of appetite
- Vomiting, stomach pain, diarrhea
- Liver inflammation/disease/cancer

There is a vaccine available for hepatitis B, but not for hepatitis C.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

HIV attacks the white blood cells that play a major role in the body's immune system. HIV can eventually lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Even without visible HIV symptoms, you can still infect others. There is no vaccine for HIV.

HIV symptoms include:

- Swollen glands
- Chronic fatigue
- Yeast infections
- Night sweats
- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Loss of appetite/weight

Routes of Exposure

Three routes of workplace exposure for BBPs include:

- Puncture wounds
- Open cuts and skin abrasions
- Eyes, nose and mouth

Safe Handling Procedures

Personal Hygiene

Properly cover open cuts and skin abrasions. In potential exposure areas, NEVER:

- Eat
- Store food
- Handle contacts
- Drink
- Smoke
- Apply cosmetics

Wash your hands and exposed skin with soap and running water:

- Immediately after an exposure incident
- After removing gloves or other PPE
- As soon as possible after an alternative hand-washing method

Engineering Controls

Engineering controls isolate or remove BBP hazards from the workplace and are the best ways to reduce your risk of exposure to blood and other potentially infectious materials (OPIM). Examples include sharps disposal containers, biohazard bags and containers, self-sheathing needles and biological safety cabinets.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Keep the following in mind when handling blood or OPIM:

- Wear gloves when handling blood or OPIM
- Wear eye protection if there's any chance of splash
- Check PPE for tears, holes or punctures
- Ensure PPE is clean and fits properly
- Remove PPE properly to avoid self-contamination
- Place used PPE in the proper containers

Gloves

- Wearing gloves does NOT remove the risk of exposure, just minimizes it
- Watch where you put your gloved hands and make sure all contamination is cleaned and disinfected later
- While you wear gloves, don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth
- Remove gloves properly to avoid self-contamination

Good Housekeeping Practices

Your employer may provide a spill kit or offer more specific guidelines regarding how to clean up blood or OPIM, but here are some general rules to follow:

1. Carefully cover surface spills with paper towels.
2. Gently pour a 10% (or 1-to-10) bleach to water solution over towels/equipment.
3. Allow the bleach solution to remain in place for at least 10 minutes.
4. Disinfect or properly discard any cleanup supplies.

Remember:

- Sharp items go in sharps containers
- Blood, OPIM and medical waste go in infectious waste or biohazard containers
- Do not recap needles unless you have to
- Use a disposal dustpan and broom, tongs or forceps to pick up broken glass

Emergency Procedures for Blood or OPIM Exposure

If you may have been exposed to a BBP, immediately:

- Clean wounds with soap and water
- Flush eyes and mucous membranes with water or normal saline solution for 15 minutes
- Alert and work with your supervisor and any other appropriate personnel
- Complete applicable exposure incident reports

You may also receive:

- Education and access to any additional disease-preventing measures
- Hepatitis B vaccine or booster
- HIV post-exposure treatment
- Blood tests
- Counseling