

"For safety's sake—do something."

Bloodborne Pathogens

Bloodborne pathogens are something that everyone should be aware of. While you may not be exposed to them on a daily basis, you should understand what potentially infectious materials are and how exposure occurs. Bloodborne pathogens are infectious microorganisms in human blood that can cause disease in humans. In addition to Bloodborne pathogens, you should also be aware of Other Potentially Infectious Materials (OPIM) such as bodily fluids. In order to reduce or eliminate the hazards of occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens, an employer must meet the requirements of OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens Standard (29 CFR 1910.1030) where employees are likely to be exposed to such hazards.

PATHOGENS CAN INCLUDE VIRUSES SUCH AS:

- Hepatitis B (HBV)
- Hepatitis C (HCV)
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

EXPOSURES: The most common exposure is from needlesticks and other sharps-related injuries. This is when an employee experiences an accidental needle stick from a used needle. This typically occurs from improperly disposing of the used needle such as in a trash can. All used needles, or other contaminated sharps, need to be disposed of in a "bio-waste sharps container".

Exposures to OPIM can occur during the following:

- Providing first aid treatment such as applying pressure or dressings to a wound.
- Cleaning up bodily fluids and secretions that could be potentially contaminated with blood.
- Handling soiled dressings contaminated with an infected person's blood or body fluid.

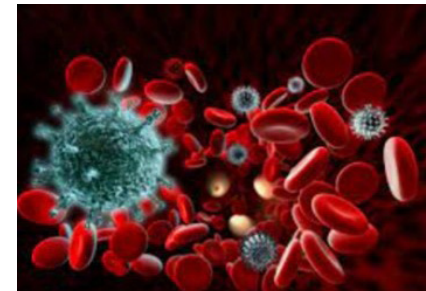
Never attempt to clean up bodily fluids unless you are trained to do so. Instead, cordon off the affected area and notify janitorial services. These individuals receive specific training, have special disinfectants, and have proper PPE to perform proper clean-up.

PERFORM THE FOLLOWING IMMEDIATELY AFTER EXPOSURE:

- Flush material from the skin.
- Wash needle sticks and cuts with soap and water.
- Flush splashes to the nose, eyes, and skin.
- Irrigate eyes with water, saline, or sterile flush.
- Report the exposure immediately. Prompt reporting is essential.
- Immediate treatment is necessary to prevent bloodborne pathogen transmission.

BEST PRACTICES TO PREVENT EXPOSURE TO BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS:

- Individuals at risk for being exposed to bloodborne pathogens at their job can get a vaccine to prevent the HBV infection for free (typically health care and janitorial workers).
- When dealing with bodily fluids or any potentially infectious materials, use "universal precautions". Using universal precautions means you treat all bodily fluids or blood as if they contain bloodborne pathogens.
- Dispose of all sharps properly. Studies show that as many as one-third of all sharp's injuries occur during disposal.



**Safety Scott says,
"Safety always is
ALWAYS!"**