

Bloodborne Pathogens

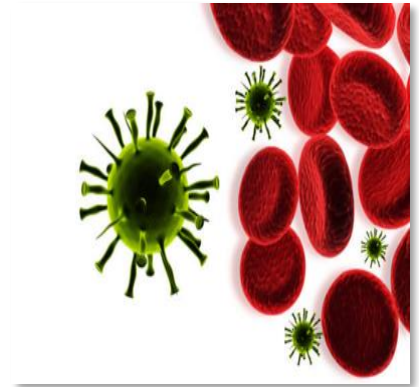
Concern about exposure to bloodborne pathogens in the workplace was limited until the appearance of the HIV virus during the AIDS epidemic in the 1980's. Prior to that time, personal protective equipment (PPE) was primarily worn by health care workers to protect the patients from getting infections. After the discovery of HIV, healthcare employees wore PPE to protect themselves from becoming infected from various infectious diseases. This influenced the development of regulations to protect workers from a variety of different diseases caused by bloodborne pathogens.

OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens standard is a federal OSHA regulation (29 CFR 1910.1030) that prescribes safeguards to protect workers against the health hazards from exposure to blood and other potentially infectious materials, and to reduce their risk from this exposure. Example health hazards include but are not limited to Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV, Malaria, Brucellosis, Syphilis, West Nile Virus, etc.

Bloodborne Pathogens

Bloodborne pathogens are bacteria or viruses that are biological hazards. They can be transmitted by contact with an infected person or from exposure to contaminated body fluids or tissues. Three very serious diseases that can be transmitted by contact with contaminated blood or other body fluids include:

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV



Other Infectious Diseases (not bloodborne)

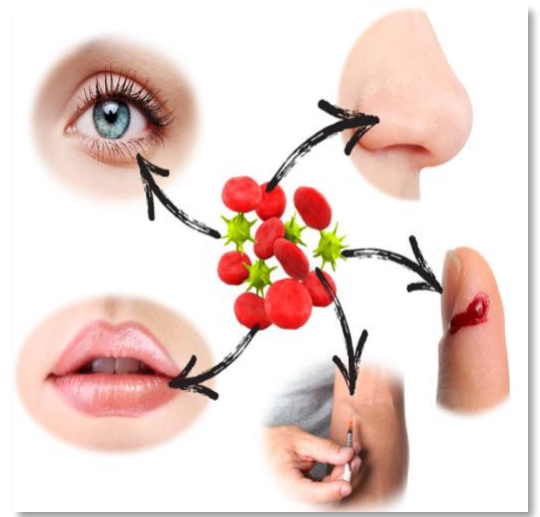
There are other serious infectious diseases that you can be exposed to, but they are not transferred by blood or body fluids. These diseases can be transmitted by skin exposure, inhalation or other methods of exposure:

- Tuberculosis
- Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus (MRSA)
- SARS
- Hepatitis A

Doctors and nurses are not the only workers who are at risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens. Police, firefighters, teachers, first-aid providers, emergency medical technicians, janitors and housekeeping staff, and laundry workers are some of the other workers who might be exposed to bloodborne pathogens at work.

Exposure to bloodborne pathogens in the workplace commonly occurs in these ways:

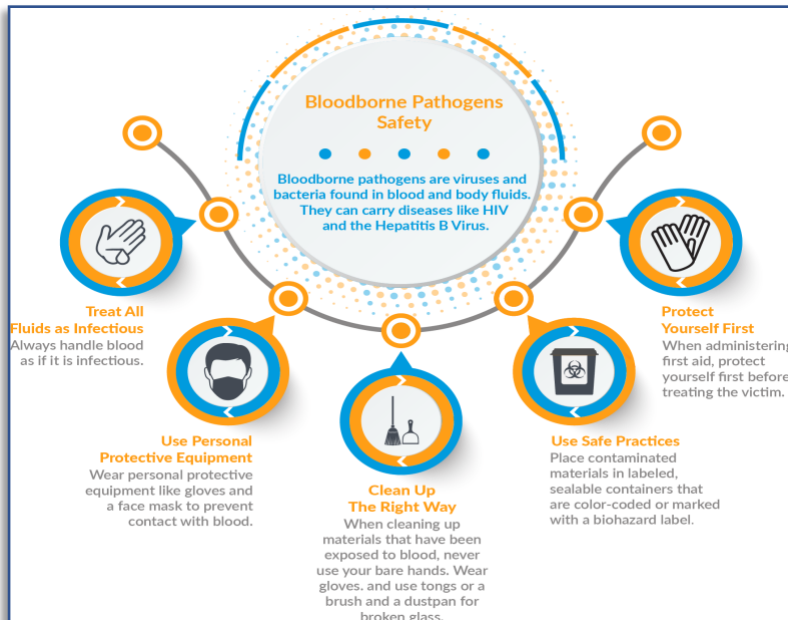
1. Needle sticks [or punctures from used needles].
2. Cuts from other contaminated sharps such as scalpels or broken glass.
3. Contact of the eye, nose, mouth or cut or abraded skin with contaminated blood or other body fluids.



Work practices that can help protect workers against exposure to bloodborne pathogens:

1. Using personal protective equipment (PPE) like gowns, gloves, face shields, eye protection, mouthpieces and resuscitation devices provide a barrier between potential contaminants and the body.
2. Cleaning and decontamination of work surfaces reduce the chances of exposure to a bloodborne pathogen.
3. Thorough hand-washing also reduces the risk of exposure.

You cannot tell by looking at a person whether or not he or she is infected with a bloodborne disease. As a precaution, it's important to treat all blood and other body fluids as if they are contaminated. That's called "universal precautions." It means that you don't touch the blood or body fluids of other people at work.



If you are exposed to a bloodborne pathogen:

1. Wash your skin well with soap and water.
2. Flush your nose, mouth or skin with water if they have been splashed.
3. If it got in your eyes, irrigate eyes with water or saline.
4. Report the exposure to **1st Advanced Care**.
5. Talk to a health care professional to find out what follow-up you need.