

## HEPATITIS: THE FACTS

- Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver caused by a virus.
- There are five different types of hepatitis, called hepatitis A, B, C, D and E. The most common are types A, B and C.
- All five types cause short-term, acute viral hepatitis. The B, C and D viruses can also cause chronic hepatitis, which can result in lifelong liver problems, permanent liver damage or death if left untreated.
- Hepatitis B and C are bloodborne pathogens and are transmitted via blood and bodily fluids.
- Hepatitis A is not a bloodborne pathogen. It is spread by eating contaminated food or putting a contaminated object in the mouth.
- Symptoms of hepatitis include jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eye whites), fatigue, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and joint pain.
- People at risk for hepatitis include health care workers, international travelers, people who live in areas with poor sanitation, IV drug users, those who practice unsafe sex or sex with multiple partners, and people who undergo hemodialysis.

### VACCINATION: Another Way to Protect Yourself

You can be vaccinated against both hepatitis A and B. If you are in a high-risk group for hepatitis, talk to your doctor about whether you should be vaccinated.



## EMERGENCY! What to Do When Someone Is Bleeding

Bleeding can be frightening, especially when the person is bleeding profusely. With all types of bleeding it is important to stop blood flow quickly. Most small cuts will stop bleeding and clot within a few minutes. Blood from deeper cuts can be stopped by gentle pressure on the wound with a clean or sterile cloth, followed by the application of a clean or sterile bandage. A deep wound or a wound that won't stop bleeding requires medical treatment.

However, serious bleeding from an artery can cause death within a few minutes, so emergency first aid is essential. **Follow these steps:**

1. **To stop bleeding from an artery**, apply hard pressure on the wound and get someone to call 911 immediately. Press with a sterile cloth or, if nothing else is available, press with your hand until medical treatment is received.
2. **Get the person to lie down**, with the head lower than the rest of the body to ensure that enough oxygen gets to the brain. If possible, position the wounded area higher than the rest of the body to reduce the blood flow.
3. **Don't clean the wound**; cover it with a bandage if possible. If the blood soaks through the bandage, press harder until the bleeding stops. **Important:** Don't remove the soaked bandages — just place another on top.

**The bottom line:** Knowing how to stop bleeding could help save someone's life. Study the steps above so you'll always be ready.

(Source: Red Cross, American Red Cross)

# Bloodborne Pathogens



## What Are Bloodborne Pathogens?

Bloodborne pathogens cause infectious diseases, such as HIV-AIDS, syphilis, and hepatitis B and C, which may be transmitted from person to person through blood or other bodily fluids. If you come in contact with bodily fluids, either as part of your job or as the result of an accident, taking the right precautions can help protect you from illness.

## Prevent Exposure Before It Happens

Follow safety procedures whenever exposure to a bodily fluid is possible:

- ✓ Wear latex gloves when helping someone after an accident — make sure latex gloves are part of your first-aid kit or are located somewhere accessible in the workplace.
- ✓ Let an injured person apply pressure to his or her own wounds, if possible. Help by calling for medical assistance.
- ✓ After helping someone who was bleeding, wash your hands with antibacterial soap and water (even if you wore gloves).
- ✓ When cleaning up blood or other fluids after an accident, wear protective equipment such as an apron, gloves and a face shield or goggles.
- ✓ When cleaning up after an accident, be sure to sanitize the entire area with an antibacterial disinfectant or a solution of one part bleach to nine parts water, rather than just wiping up.
- ✓ Alert a supervisor and fellow employees to any accident that carries the risk of bloodborne pathogen exposure.

## Don't Believe the Myths

Bloodborne pathogens are NOT spread through

- Casual contact such as handshakes, hugging or kissing
- Food preparation
- Giving blood
- Bites from mosquitoes or other insects
- Public restrooms

**Remember:** Unless you work in health care, law enforcement or a field that uses sharp-edged tools, it is unlikely that you will come in contact with blood or bloodborne pathogens in the workplace. Bloodborne pathogens are only spread through contact with blood or other bodily fluids such as semen or amniotic fluid.



## For Health Care Workers

**Most cases of occupational bloodborne pathogen exposure occur in a health care setting. For this reason, health care workers must follow special safety procedures, including the following:**

- Disposing of medical waste in proper containers that are specially marked
- Using "sharps" containers for disposing of needles
- Following procedures for cleaning up bodily fluids and sanitizing the area
- Wearing personal protective equipment
- Maintaining a needlestick injury log and reporting any injuries to one's employer

## OTHER WAYS BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS ARE TRANSMITTED

- Intravenous drug use
- Sharing of razors, toothbrushes and other personal items
- Tattooing and body piercing, if tools are not cleaned or the artist does not wear gloves
- Unsafe sex practices
- From mother to child during pregnancy and childbirth

## What to Do in Case of Exposure

Exposure to a bloodborne pathogen can be a scary event. Sometimes people don't want to tell anyone out of fear. But telling a supervisor and logging the injury are important steps toward getting help and making the workplace safer. If you are exposed to bodily fluids, follow these steps.

- Wash needlesticks or cuts with soap and water.
- Flush splashes of bodily fluids to the nose, mouth or skin with water.
- Flush the eyes with clean water or saline solution if they were splashed.
- Report the incident to a supervisor immediately.
- Get medical attention. In some cases, drug treatment is immediately instituted while the injured person awaits blood testing.