



7 Minute Safety Talks

Protect Yourself from Bloodborne Pathogens

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Human blood carries microorganisms known as “bloodborne pathogens.”
 - Workers must take precautions to protect themselves if they have occupational exposure to blood.
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TALKING POINTS

- 1. Human blood and other bodily fluids can contain bloodborne pathogens that cause serious diseases.**
 - One such pathogen is the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).
 - AIDS, as you know, attacks the human immune system so it can't fight off disease.
 - Even with some impressive advances in treatment, AIDS is usually a fatal illness.
 - Other more common bloodborne pathogens are HBV and HCV, the hepatitis B and C viruses.
 - Hepatitis C is the most common chronic bloodborne infection in the United States.
 - Because it develops slowly, people may not even realize they have it, it can lead to chronic liver disease.
- 2. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to identify job classifications with occupational exposure to blood and bodily fluids as part of their regular duties.**
 - Some workers, especially in the healthcare field, may have occupational exposure on a daily basis.
 - Others, such as laundry workers, police and fire fighters, lab technicians, and mortuary workers, may have less frequent exposure, but all workers need to know how to protect themselves.
 - Employers are required to offer free hepatitis B vaccinations to employees who are likely to be exposed to the virus.
 - Employers must also provide an evaluation after any exposure and any laboratory tests required under the supervision of a licensed healthcare professional at no cost to the employee.
- 3. Workers can protect themselves by following “universal precautions” and treating all blood and bodily fluids as though they are infected.**
 - Employers must provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent blood or other bodily fluids from contacting skin, eyes, mucous membrane, or street clothes.
 - PPE usually begins with gloves.
 - If you expect to handle or touch contaminated surfaces or items
 - If your hands might contact blood or other potentially infectious materials
 - To perform vascular access procedures
 - In addition to gloves, other PPE might include eye protection when there's risk of splashes, surgical masks to protect mucous membranes, and protective lab coats, surgical caps, or other clothing.
- 4. The following are some other important safety precautions for preventing bloodborne pathogen exposure.**
 - Don't suction or use pipette to draw blood or other potentially infectious materials by mouth.
 - Minimize spraying, splashing, spattering, and droplet generation in all procedures involving blood or other potentially infectious materials.
 - Don't eat, drink, smoke, apply cosmetics or lip balm, or handle contact lenses in work areas with possible bloodborne pathogen exposure.
 - Don't keep food or drinks where blood or other potentially infectious materials are present.
 - Use a disinfectant solution to clean and decontaminate any where fluids have spilled as soon as possible.



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5. Follow safety rules to protect yourself from sharps injuries.

- Use needleless devices wherever possible to protect against sharp injuries.
- Never break or shear contaminated needles or other sharps.
- Never reuse needles or recap needles.
- Always use puncture-resistant, leakproof, containers for disposal of needles and other sharps.

6. Don't forget one of the most basic procedures – WASH YOUR HANDS frequently and thoroughly.

- Wash with soap and warm running water as soon as possible after contact with potentially infectious materials.
- In locations where soap and water are unavailable, use antiseptic alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- Frequent handwashing is also essential to prevent the spread of other infections – so make it a habit that you follow every day.

DISCUSSION

Discuss with your trainees the ways in which they may be exposed to bloodborne pathogens as they go about their daily duties. What special precautions should they take because of the type of exposure that would occur because of their particular jobs?

CONCLUSION

Following universal precautions is vital to protect yourself from deadly bloodborne pathogens. You can be safe if you always wear required PPE and follow safety rules.