



SAFE WORK

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E EVERYDAY

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Exposure to Human Blood/ Bodily Fluids

Potential Hazard:

There is a risk in many non-healthcare workplaces, especially those with sharp objects and machinery, of workers being exposed to the blood or bodily fluids of another worker. When a worker has contact with another person's blood or certain other bodily fluids, there is a chance they can be infected by bloodborne pathogens. There are a number of bloodborne pathogens, of which Hepatitis B and C and HIV(AIDS) are of most concern.

Transmission of these pathogens occurs through direct contact with infected blood or certain bodily fluids (semen, vaginal secretions, blood tinged bodily cavity fluids, etc). Exposure to urine, feces, vomit, phlegm, saliva, tears, or nasal secretions are not considered risky unless they are visibly blood tinged.

This bulletin provides information on how to safely manage exposure to human blood and bodily fluids, particularly in non-healthcare workplaces.

How to Control the Hazard:

For workplaces where workers may be exposed to sharp objects (knives, saws, scissors, needles), safe work procedures for managing exposure to human blood and bodily fluids must be developed and implemented, and workers must be trained in these procedures.

The safe work procedures should include information on:

- What is considered a significant exposure
- How to safely clean-up an area contaminated with blood or bodily fluids
- What to do when a worker is exposed to another person's blood or bodily fluids

Each of these points is discussed below.

What is a significant exposure?

Significant exposure to blood or bodily fluids (where there is risk of infection) happens only in certain ways:

- Puncturing one's skin with a sharp object (needlestick, razor, saw blade, knife, etc.) that is coated with blood or bodily fluids
- When blood is splashed on to a mucous membrane (eyes, nose, mouth)
- When blood is splashed onto broken skin (cuts, eczema, other damaged skin)

When blood or bodily fluids come into contact with skin that is intact, this is not considered to be a risk for the spread of bloodborne pathogens.

How to safely clean areas contaminated with blood or bodily fluids

General

Employers must ensure that anything in the workplace that has been contaminated by blood or bodily fluids is disposed of or cleaned by a competent person in a manner that prevents workers from being exposed to the blood or bodily fluids.

(see over)

Workplace Safety and Health Division Contact Information:

Winnipeg: (204) 945-3446
Toll-Free: 1-866-888-8186 (Manitoba only)
24-Hour Emergency Line: (204) 945-0581

Publications/resources available at: www.safemanitoba.com



General (continued)

When cleaning areas or objects contaminated with blood or bodily fluids, latex or vinyl gloves should always be worn. Hands should always be washed thoroughly with soap and water after any direct contact with blood or bodily fluids.

Cleaning Products

Soap (and water) is the most common and most easily accessible cleaning product. A commonly used disinfectant is household bleach solution, one part bleach to nine parts water, prepared daily. For decontamination of aluminum or electronic equipment, use 70% isopropyl alcohol solution applied for 10 minutes.

Spills

Floor areas or benches which have been contaminated should be promptly cleaned with absorbent disposable paper towels which are then disposed into plastic bags. The area should then be cleaned with water and detergent followed by disinfecting with a household bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water), and then given time to air-dry. If mops have been used in the clean-up, they should be thoroughly washed in soap and water and dried before re-use.

Soiled Clothing

Clothing soiled with blood or bodily fluids should be removed and laundered in the usual fashion.

Soiled Tools and Instruments

Tools, chisels, drill bits, etc. which come into contact with blood or bodily fluids should be cleaned with paper towels, washed and decontaminated with an appropriate disinfectant. Extra caution should be taken when cleaning sharp tools and instruments.

Sharps Disposal Procedures

When disposing of sharp objects, safe pickup procedures must be practiced. Sharps must be disposed of in a puncture proof container (not in the regular garbage) and safe garbage handling procedures must be followed.

What to do when a worker is exposed to blood or bodily fluids

If a worker has been exposed to blood or bodily fluids, the following steps should be taken:

1. The worker should flush the contacted area with water as soon as possible and report the incident to their supervisor and occupational health personnel/first aider.
2. If a significant exposure (see previous page) has occurred, the worker should seek medical attention immediately, preferably within two hours. Timely assessment is necessary for the initiation of preventative medication and/or vaccination.

For additional information, visit the Manitoba Health website at:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/index.html>

Reference to legal requirements under workplace safety and health legislation:

- First Aid: Manitoba Regulation 217/2006 Part 5
- Personal Protective Equipment: Manitoba Regulation 217/2006 Part 6
- Chemical and Biological Substances: Manitoba Regulation 217/2006 Part 36

Additional workplace safety and health information available at: www.safemanitoba.com