



Bloodborne pathogens (BBP) are microorganisms that can cause disease when transferred from an infected person to another person through blood or other potentially infected body fluids. The organisms can cause serious illness and death. The most common diseases spread in this manner are Hepatitis B (HBV) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Examples of other bloodborne diseases include malaria, Hepatitis C, and syphilis.

Who is at Risk?

Healthcare and public safety workers could be potentially exposed to these disease pathogens. Non-healthcare workers may become exposed at work while providing help to an injured co-worker and encountering the injured person’s blood or body fluids.

How can you become exposed?

Exposure to bloodborne pathogens may occur in many ways. Any opening or break in the skin allows infected blood or fluids to enter your body. Scrapes, cuts, rashes, burns, that create an opening in the skin are entryways for bloodborne pathogens. Your eyes, nose, and mouth are mucous membranes and openings for diseases to enter.

Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are methods of protecting yourself from bloodborne pathogens. Universal precautions assume all body fluids are infected with bloodborne pathogens. Universal precautions include:

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) PPE is to be used at all times to prevent skin or mucous membrane contact with bodily fluids. Always inspect PPE for cracks, holes, or other damage. Never use damaged PPE. PPE examples include lab coats, gloves, eye goggles, face shields, etc.

Wash hands or other skin surfaces thoroughly and immediately if contaminated.

If you think you’ve been exposed

If you’ve come in contact with blood or other potentially infectious bodily fluids, you’ve been involved in an exposure incident. Stay calm, wash yourself thoroughly, and report to your supervisor immediately. Inform your supervisor of how, when, where, and whose blood you came in contact with. If you’ve been involved in an exposure incident, seek medical attention. A medical professional will provide you with appropriate testing, treatment, and education.