

Bloodborne Pathogens

It is important to keep yourself safe in the workplace. This includes assisting others who may have been injured. Whenever there is an accident at work you have an increased chance of being exposed to a Bloodborne Pathogen. A pathogen is a specific cause of disease, such as a virus or bacteria, and “bloodborne” means it is carried by or in blood. It is also possible to contract some bloodborne pathogens through other bodily fluids.

Different Types of Bloodborne Pathogens:

There are three Bloodborne Pathogens that OSHA is especially concerned with.

HIV and AIDS:

- HIV leads to AIDS
- HIV attacks and depletes the human immune system
- Early symptoms resemble the flu virus
- HIV does not survive outside the body
- There is no known cure for HIV or AIDS

Hepatitis B Virus (HBV):

- 1.4 million people infected in the United States
- Can lead to chronic liver disease, cancer, and death
- Symptoms include fatigue, abdominal pain, no appetite, nausea, and vomiting
- Vaccine is available
- Can survive outside the body, including in dried blood up to 10 days

Hepatitis C Virus (HCV):

- Is the most common Bloodborne infection with 3.2 million infected in the United States
- Can lead to chronic liver disease, cancer, and death
- Symptoms can take years to manifest and include flu-like symptoms, dark urine, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea/vomiting, and abdominal pain
- Treatment is marginally effective

Routes of Exposure:

Routes of exposure include contaminated sharp objects or needles, broken skin/rash, eyes, mouth, and nose. Because it is so easy to become contaminated if you are exposed, it is important that you wear the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep yourself safe.

Protecting Yourself:

When exposed to blood or other bodily fluids is important to wear the proper protection. This includes: gloves, mask, eye protection, and protective clothing. When cleaning up bodily fluids you also want to wear your PPE. You can use a 10:1 Ratio between water and bleach to kill any possible bloodborne pathogen.