

Universal Precautions

Guidelines from the California State Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control are incorporated in the following preventive procedures. The basic principle promoted by these guidelines is to use Universal Precautions. This means to use appropriate precautions regardless of the knowledge of which germs are present in an individual's body fluids such as blood, saliva, nasal, discharges, vomitus, urine or feces. In other words, when handling the discharges from another person's body, always use Universal Precautions, especially when handling discharges containing blood. Do not limit hand washing, gloving and careful disposal of contaminated refuse only to those times when dealing with persons known or suspected of carrying specific germs. These Universal Precautions are general precautions personnel can take to prevent the spread of all infectious diseases, with specific information about HIV/AIDS and hepatitis infections.

Universal Precautions

These guidelines are to be followed in order to provide simple and effective procedures for all persons who may be exposed to the body fluids of another person.

1. Hand washing is the single most important technique for preventing the spread of infections.

When to wash hands: Hands should be washed before eating, drinking, food handling and smoking. Hands should be washed after toileting. Hand washing procedures should be observed immediately after exposure to any body fluids.

How to wash hands: Wet hand with running water and apply soap from a dispenser. Lather well and wash vigorously for at least 15 seconds. Soap suspends easily - removable soil and microorganism, allowing them to be washed off. Running water is necessary to carry away dirt and debris. Rinse well under running water with water draining from wrist to fingertips. Leave water running. Dry hands well with a paper towel and then turn off the faucet with the paper towel. Discard the towel.

2. Avoid direct skin contact with body fluids.

How to avoid contact with body fluids: Allow a student or staff person to clean own body fluid spills when this can be done safely. The bloodstream can be contaminated through breaks in the skin such as cuts or abrasions on hands. Cover open lesions on caregiver or person receiving care. All persons should avoid unnecessary touching of their mouth and eyes. Infections which are spread through the oral route or mucous membranes can be transmitted when contaminated hands bring microorganisms to the mouth and eyes.

How to avoid skin contact with body fluids: Disposable gloves should be used when contact with body fluids is anticipated (such as bloody nose, diapering). Disposable gloves are to be used one time only and then discarded in a plastic-lined waste basket.

Hands should be washed with soap and water after discarding of gloves in each instance where gloves are used.

3. If direct skin contact with another person's body fluids occurs, such as in unanticipated vomiting, hands and other affected skin areas should be washed with soap and water immediately after contact has ended.
4. Environmental surfaces contaminated with body fluids should be disinfected.

Environmental surfaces contaminated with body fluids should be cleaned promptly with the approved disinfectant solution. Disposable gloves should be worn. Disposable paper towels or tissues should be used, and then discarded in a plastic lined wastebasket. Mop solution used to clean up body fluid spills should consist of the approved disinfectant solution. Mops should be soaked in this solution after use, then washed in hot water before rinsing.

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5. Use leak-proof plastic bags for disposal of all spills of body fluids.

Leak-proof plastic bags should be placed in all waste baskets in the school nurse's restroom and office and as needed in other areas.

If an incident occurs involving the handling of body fluids, all disposable materials including gloves, must be discarded in a leak-proof bag. This plastic bag then must be closed and placed in another plastic bag at the time of disposal.

Custodial personnel should avoid exposure of open skin lesions or their mucous membranes to body fluids when cleaning or disposing of materials contaminated with body fluids.

In order to implement the above procedures, the following supplies will be placed in each school by the Operations Department:

1. Leak-proof plastic bags for waste paper baskets
2. Sprayer bottle (for approved disinfectant solution)

The disposable gloves should be kept in the school nurse's office to be utilized by any staff member when necessary.

In the event the handling of body fluids occurs outside the school nurse's office (such as classroom, cafeteria), the above procedures still apply. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS.

AIDS: An Overview

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is caused by a virus called Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). It is uncertain whether everyone infected with HIV will develop AIDS. However, HIV infection usually leads to a fatal breakdown of the body's immune system. The immune system is the body's biological defense that helps protect the body from illnesses. Once HIV attacks the immune system, the person becomes susceptible to a variety of "opportunistic infections," illnesses that are not usually a threat to persons who have healthy immune systems. AIDS is the final stage of HIV infection.

The most common diseases associated with AIDS are Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia, a parasitic infection of the lungs and Kaposi's Sarcoma, a rare skin cancer. AIDS is also characterized by other opportunistic diseases to include: yeast infections of the mouth, throat and vagina, tuberculosis, neurological dysfunctions, cytomegalovirus (CMV) infections, large herpes ulcers, and toxoplasmosis, a parasitic infection. It is important to note that many non-HIV-infected persons can have these diseases.

Initial symptoms of AIDS vary widely and can be similar to other non-AIDS related medical problems. However, medical attention should be sought immediately if any of the following common AIDS symptoms develop:

- Rapid weight loss of unknown cause (more than 10 lbs. in two months)
- Appearance of swollen or tender glands (lymph nodes) for no apparent reason, lasting for more than four weeks
- Unexplained shortness of breath, frequently accompanied by a dry cough, and not due to allergies or smoking
- Persistent diarrhea
- Intermittent high fever or soaking night sweats of unknown origin

Universal Precautions (continued)

- A marked change in illness pattern – either frequency, severity, or length of sickness
- The appearance of one or more purple spots on the surface of the skin or inside the mouth

How do people get AIDS?

Anyone can get the HIV virus. There are two major ways to get HIV; through blood contact and through sex.

Persons can get HIV from using drug injection needles and syringes that have been used by an HIV- infected person. Blood is left in the syringe and needle, and when the person, "shoots up," blood and the HIV are injected directly into the blood stream.

Babies born to HIV infected women may become infected before or during birth, or shortly after birth through breast feeding.

In the past, infected blood transfusions were a source of HIV infection. Since 1985, blood is screened and now carries a very small risk of infection.

Unprotected sex is the other major ways people get infected with HIV. HIV may be transmitted when a person's HIV infected semen or vaginal fluid comes in contact with their sex partner's vagina, rectum, urethra or mouth. This means that any type of sexual relation (vaginal, anal, oral) with a HIV-infected partner may lead to HIV infection.

HIV could also be transmitted by penetrating the skin with HIV-infected needles used for: tattoos, ear-piercing, acupuncture, vitamin or steroid injections.

It is important to note that there is no way of knowing whether a person is infected with the HIV virus just by looking at them. Most people who are infected do not have symptoms for several years. HIV infected persons may not know they are infected until they become ill or are tested for HIV antibodies. Infected individuals without symptoms can transmit the infection to others. A single exposure to the HIV virus may result in infection.

The median incubation time from HIV infection to AIDS diagnosis is estimated to be 10 years. The range can be 2-16 years.

How is HIV/AIDS Virus NOT transmitted?

There is no evidence that the virus is spread through casual social contact. People do not get AIDS from hugging or closed mouth kissing; people do not get AIDS through shaking hands; AIDS is not acquired by handling door knobs, telephones or office equipment. AIDS is not transmitted by insect bites.

Can AIDS be prevented?

Yes. AIDS is transmitted primarily through voluntary activities such as having sex and using injection drugs. This means that people have considerable control in preventing AIDS infection. Individuals can reduce their risks of becoming infected by following these recommendations:

- Abstinence from sex or drug use is the surest way to avoid becoming HIV infected.
- Do not have sex with anyone who is infected with the AIDS virus or with anyone who engages in high-risk behaviors. If you do use a latex condom, non-oxynol 9 may be partially effective in inhibiting the AIDS virus.

Universal Precautions (continued)

- Do not use drugs and /or alcohol. Do not share needles and syringes. Sharing needles, syringes and cookers is very dangerous.
- Women who have engaged in drug use or who have or had sex partners who have or had been involved in high-risk behaviors, should be HIV antibody tested before becoming pregnant.
- Do not share personal items such as toothbrushes or razors that may be contaminated with the AIDS virus.
- N. California AIDS Hotline, 1-800-367-2437
- CDC Information line 1-800-458-5281

Hepatitis: An Overview

Hepatitis A is a viral disease which causes inflammation of the liver. It is spread by the fecal-oral route, contaminated food or water, or sexual exposure. The best prevention is proper hand washing. Hepatitis A causes a mild to severe infection and is easily spread among household groups.

The symptoms are flu-like, and can include dark urine, white stools, and yellowing of eyes and skin. The infection can occur without symptoms. Individuals can have Hepatitis A only once and unlike Hepatitis B, an individual does not become a carrier of the Hepatitis A virus.

The incubation period is 2-6 weeks. Food handlers and household or close contacts of persons with Hepatitis A should have ISG (Immune Serum Globulin) within two weeks of contact.

In the school setting, food handlers and other persons working in the cafeteria should be instructed to wash hands carefully before working. Plastic gloves should be worn when handling foods such as salads and sandwiches.

Hepatitis B and C are viral diseases characterized by inflammation of the liver. The viruses are found in the blood and body fluids of an infected person. The onset of symptoms may appear six weeks to six months after becoming infected with the virus. Infection with the Hepatitis B Virus can result in no symptoms, or mild to severe illness. Some patients with Hepatitis B and C are carriers and can infect others. Some of the carriers may develop chronic liver problems.

Hepatitis B and C are transmitted by the following actions: sexual contact with an infected person; sharing instruments which penetrate the skin with someone who is infected, such as in tattooing, ear piercing, razors, and intravenous needles/syringes; direct contact of infected blood with mucous membranes of the eye and mouth; needle sticks with needles containing infected blood; direct contact of infected blood with broken skin; sharing toothbrushes with an infected person and being born to an infected mother.

A vaccine for Hepatitis B is available from health care providers. The cost of the vaccine is covered by most employee health plans. The vaccination for Hepatitis B consists of a series of three intramuscular doses. Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for people at high risk for type B Hepatitis, such as hospital workers, and family members and sexual partners of Hepatitis B carriers.

Research is currently being done on Hepatitis D and E. There is no vaccine for either of these viruses.

For more information, contact the Sacramento Health Department or Natomas Unified School District Blood Borne Pathogens Manual. In the school setting, personnel who work with disabled students are advised to consult their physician regarding receiving Hepatitis B vaccine.