



## Bloodborne Pathogens

Most employers are required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to protect staff from exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens. The information contained in this document is a general summary of the federal regulations and some good practices for compliance. States may impose additional regulations that pertain to this topic.

### **Definition:**

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms in the blood or other body fluids that can cause illness and disease in people. These microorganisms can be transmitted through contact with contaminated blood and body fluids.

### **Regulations:**

Rules are designed to limit occupational exposure to blood and other potentially infectious materials since any exposure could result in transmission of Bloodborne Pathogens which could lead to disease or death.

### **Scope:**

The rules cover all employees who could be "reasonably anticipated" to face contact with blood and other potentially infectious materials as the result of performing their job duties. OSHA has not attempted to list all occupations where exposures could occur. "Good Samaritan" acts such as assisting a co-worker with a nosebleed would not be considered occupational exposure.

### **Required Plan:**

The regulations require employers to develop an Exposure Control Plan. The plan must identify, in writing, tasks and procedures as well as job classifications where occupational exposure to blood occurs--without regard to personal protective clothing and equipment. It must also set forth the schedule for implementing other provisions of the standard and specify the procedure for evaluating circumstances surrounding exposure incidents. The plan must be accessible and communicated to staff. The plan should be reviewed and updated at least annually--more often if necessary to accommodate workplace changes.

### **Compliance:**

Universal precautions, (treating body fluids/materials as if infectious) are common work practice controls. The rule stresses hand washing and requires all employers to provide facilities and ensure that employees use them following exposure to blood.

Employers must provide, at no cost, and require employees to use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, gowns, masks, and replace these when necessary.

The rules require a written schedule for cleaning and identifying the method of decontamination to be used for exposures or spills. The regulations also include provisions for handling contaminated laundry to minimize exposures.

### **Vaccinations:**

Employers are required to make no-cost Hepatitis B vaccinations available to all employees who have occupational exposure to blood within 10 working days of assignment. Staff must sign a declination form if they choose not to be vaccinated, but may later opt to receive the vaccine. Clarification of this requirement shows that only staff with exposure as a primary function of their position must have this vaccination available. Federal interpretations of the rules suggest that Lifeguards, childcare staff and cleaning staff do not generally have exposure as a primary function of their positions; nurses and healthcare workers do. State plan interpretations may vary.

### **Post-Exposure Follow-Up:**

The rules specify procedures to be made available to all staff that has had an exposure incident including any laboratory tests. Follow-up should include a confidential medical evaluation documenting the circumstances of exposure, identifying and testing the source individual if feasible, testing the exposed staff person's blood if he/she consents, post-exposure prophylaxis, counseling and evaluation of reported illnesses.

### **Training:**

Training should include information about the standard and explanation of its contents, general discussion on Bloodborne Diseases and their transmission, the exposure control plan, work practice controls, personal protective equipment, housekeeping (and laundry), Hepatitis B vaccine, response to emergencies involving blood, how to handle exposure incidents, the post-exposure evaluation and follow-up program.

*This document includes information obtained from the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#).*

More information is available at the Safe-Wise Consulting [Online Resource Library](#), including the following documents:

Bloodborne Pathogens Model Exposure Control [Plan](#)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) [Fact Sheet](#)