

American Heart Association Safety Tips: Bloodborne Pathogens

Bloodborne pathogens are disease-causing microorganisms in blood and other potentially infectious body fluids. The hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) are examples of bloodborne pathogens. These viruses can be passed on to others, and can cause serious illness or death.

Bloodborne pathogens can enter your body through exposure to blood or other potentially infectious body fluids. Exposure may occur through your mucous membranes, including eyes, nose, mouth or through an opening in your skin if you are splashed with blood or other potentially infectious body fluids or by being stuck with a contaminated needle or sharp object. Providing first aid puts you at risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens. It is very important to wear appropriate personal protective equipment to decrease this risk.

If your job or volunteer activities have the potential of exposure to blood or other potentially infectious body fluids, the following information will help you protect yourself. Here are some tips on how to stay safe when you come in contact with another person's blood or other potentially infectious body fluids:

- If you help someone who is bleeding or if you are potentially exposed to blood or other potentially infectious body fluids, you must wear personal protective equipment such as gloves, gown, and goggles or a face shield. Employers must provide you with appropriate personal protective equipment free of charge.
- If blood or other potentially infectious body fluid is on your gloves, dispose of the gloves properly by putting them in a biohazard waste bag. If you do not have a biohazard waste bag, put the gloves in a plastic bag that can be sealed before you dispose of it. Always wash your hands with soap and running water after you remove and dispose of the gloves.
- It is essential that you quickly and completely clean up any blood or other potentially infectious body fluids with soap and water to limit the chance of exposing your coworkers to bloodborne pathogens. Wear personal protective equipment when cleaning up blood or potential infectious body fluids.
- Hands are the most likely areas to be exposed to blood or other potentially infectious body fluids. If you wash your hands with soap and running water after contact with blood or other potentially infectious body fluids, you greatly reduce your chance of becoming sick or spreading germs to others.
- It is very important that you report any exposures to blood or other potentially infectious body fluids to your supervisor. Reporting all exposures helps you get treatment and helps your employer identify and reduce causes of exposure.

For more information:

- American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org/workplace
- OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens and Needlestick Prevention Safety and Health Topics Page: www.osha.gov/SLTC/bloodbornepathogens