Definitions

Blood and Other Potentially Infectious Materials (OPIM)

Defined as the following human body fluids: semen, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pleural fluid, pericardial fluid, peritoneal fluid, amniotic fluid, saliva in dental procedures, any body fluid that is possibly contaminated with blood, and all body fluids in situations where it is difficult or impossible to differentiate between body fluids; any unfixed human tissue or organ from a human.

Infection Control Systems

Universal precautions is a system designed to prevent transmission of blood borne pathogens in healthcare and other settings. Under universal precautions, blood/OPIM of all patients should always be considered potentially infectious for HIV and other pathogens.

Standard Precautions is a newer system that considers all body fluids, except sweat, to be potentially infectious.

Universal and Standard Precautions involve the use of protective barriers, defined below as the “personal protective equipment” section, to reduce the risk of exposure of the employee’s skin or mucous membranes to OPIM. It is also recommended that all healthcare workers take precautions to prevent injuries caused by needles, scalpels, and other sharp instruments or devices. Both Universal and Standard Precautions apply to blood and OPIM listed above in the Blood and Other Potentially Infectious Materials (OPIM) section.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Gloves, masks, protective eyewear and chin-length plastic face shields are examples of personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE shall be provided and worn by employees in all instances where they will or may come into contact with blood or OPIM. This includes, but is not limited to dentistry, phlebotomy or processing of any bodily fluid specimen, and postmortem (after death) procedures.

Traditionally, latex gloves have been advised to use when dealing with blood or OPIM. However, there have been documented cases of people with allergies to latex. In most circumstances nitrile, vinyl or other glove alternatives meet the definition of appropriate gloves and may be used in place of latex gloves.

Safer Medical Devices

Safer medical devices and work practices shall be used in preference to personal protective equipment to minimize or eliminate employee exposure.

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene (soap and water washing or use of waterless alcohol based hand rub) must be performed:

- After removal of gloves and/or other protective equipment
• Immediately after hand contact with blood or other infectious materials
• Upon leaving the work area

Soap and water hand washing must be performed whenever hands are visibly contaminated or there is a reasonable likelihood of contamination. Proper soap and water washing technique involves the following:

• Using soap, warm (almost hot) water and good friction, scrub the top, back and all sides of fingers, fingertips, between fingers and under nails.
• Lather well and rinse for at least 10 seconds. When rinsing, begin at fingertips, so that the dirty water runs down and off hands from the wrists. It is preferable to use a pump type liquid soap instead of hand soap.
• Dry hands with paper towels, Use the dry paper to turn off faucets (don’t touch with clean hands).

Housekeeping

The work area is to be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. The employer is required to determine and implement a written schedule for cleaning and disinfection based on the location within facility, type of surface to be cleaned, type of soil present and task or procedures performed. All equipment, environmental and working surfaces must be properly cleaned and disinfected after contact with blood or OPIM.

Contaminated broken glassware must be removed using mechanical means, like a brush and dustpan or vacuum cleaner.

Disinfectants

Chemical germicides and disinfectants used at recommended dilutions must be used to decontaminate environmental surfaces. Consult the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists of registered sterilants, tuberculosis disinfectants and antimicrobials with HIV/HBV efficacy claims for verification that the disinfectants used is appropriate.

Specimen Handling

Specimens of blood or OPIM must be placed in a closeable, labeled or color-coded leak proof container prior to being stored or transported.

Laundry

Laundry that is or may be soiled with blood or OPIM, and/or may contain contaminated sharps, must be treated as though contaminated.

Contaminated laundry must be bagged at the location where it was used, placed and transported in bags that are labeled. Laundry workers must wear protective gloves and other appropriate personal protective clothing when handling potentially contaminated laundry. All contaminated laundry must be cleaned and laundered so that any infectious agents are destroyed.
Regulated Waste Disposal

All regulated waste must be placed in closeable, leak proof containers or bags that are color coded (red-bagged) or labeled to prevent leakage during handling, storage and transport. Disposal of waste shall be in accordance with federal, state and local regulations.

Sharps Disposal

Needles are NOT to be recapped, purposely bent or broken, removed or otherwise manipulated by hand. After they are used, disposable syringes and needles, scalpel blades and other sharp items are to be immediately placed in puncture resistant, labeled containers for disposal.

Tags/Labels

Tags or labels must be used to protect employees from exposure to potentially hazardous biological agent. All required tags must have the following:

- Tags must contain a signal word or symbol and a major message. The signal word shall be “BIOHARARD” or the biological hazard symbol. The major message must indicate the specific hazardous condition or the instruction to be communicated to the employee.
- The signal word must be readable at a minimum of five feet or such greater distance as warranted by hazard.
- The tag’s major message must be presented in either pictographs, written text or both
- The signal work and major message must be understandable to all employees who may be exposed to the identified hazard.
- All employees will be informed as to the meaning of various tags used throughout the workplace and what special precautions are necessary.

Personal Activities

Eating, drinking, smoking, applying cosmetic or lip balm and handling contact lenses are prohibited in the work areas that carry occupational exposure.

Food and Drink

Food and drink must not be stored in refrigerators, freezers or cabinets where blood or OPIM are stored, or in other areas.

Post Exposure Management

Employers must make a confidential post-exposure medical evaluation available to employees who report an exposure incident. The post-exposure medical evaluation must be:

- Made immediately available
- Kept confidential
- Provided at no cost to employee
- Provided according to current United States Public Health Service recommendations.