



Topic of the Month... Blood borne Pathogens

Every day, we are exposed to the elements. Some of these exposures may pose a hazard to our health. Viruses, bacteria, plants, animals, and humans can present biological hazards. These can lead to allergies, infections, illnesses, cancer, even death. Some infections can be acquired and transmitted through contact with blood and body fluids. Blood borne pathogens, infectious microorganisms that are present in our body fluids, can cause disease in humans. These diseases include: 1) Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), a virus that affects the body's immune system; 2) Anthrax, a bacterial infection, produces spores that generally cause lung infections, but can also affect the skin, mouth, and throat if exposure is from undercooked meat or other contaminated food; 3) Hepatitis, an infection of the liver; 4) Influenza (flu), viruses that affect the respiratory tract (throat, lungs, nose, mouth, etc.); 5) Lyme disease, caused by a bacterium that is spread by ticks to the host (e.g. rodents, pets, humans, etc.); 5) Tuberculosis, a severe infection of the lungs caused by bacteria; 6) Others too numerous to mention individually.

When dealing with circumstances where it's hard to tell the difference between body fluid types, all of them should be considered potentially infectious materials.

Universal Precautions are one approach to infection control when dealing with blood borne pathogens. Employees can use universal precautions to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials. Treat all blood and other potentially infectious materials with appropriate precautions such as using engineering and work practice controls to limit exposure.

The following is a list of Personal Protective Equipment and when it should be used.

Gloves: Wear whenever hand contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials is possible. Disposable (single-use) gloves, such as examination gloves, must be replaced as soon as possible when contaminated or when their ability to function as a barrier is compromised. **They are not to be reused.** Utility gloves can be reused if decontaminated, but must be discarded if cracked, discolored, punctured or show any signs of deterioration.



Masks, Eye Protection and Face Shields: Use in combination whenever splashes, spray or droplets of infectious materials are generated.

Gowns, Aprons and other Protective Clothing: Wear when exposure to the body, head, feet, or clothing is possible. The type and characteristics of the clothing will depend on the task and the exposure anticipated.

CPR Mouthpieces: Use when CPR is given. Mouthpieces should have a one-way valve to prevent contamination from the victim.

Universal Precautions are a basic part of a Blood borne Pathogen program. A complete program should include: **exposure determination** and **evaluation** of your workplace for exposures; **employee education** and **training** in the types of potential worker exposures in your workplace; **control measures; engineering controls** and **work practice controls** to eliminate or reduce the exposures; **employee vaccinations** to provide protection from certain biological hazards; **post exposure evaluation** and **follow-up** procedures in the case of an unexpected exposure; **proper waste disposal** methods for any contaminated material to reduce exposure; and **proper warning labels** for bags and containers system to properly identify hazards.

Workers with exposures to the elements must take appropriate measures to avoid problems.

Thanks for your time. Let's work together to make Georgia a safer place to work.