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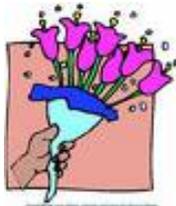
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FEBRUARY IT IS JUST A HEART BEAT AWAY



FEBRUARY, engagement rings inside heart shaped boxes, florists running from one delivery to another with large beautiful bouquets for loved ones. When thinking of our loved ones this way, let's remember to consider other ways to look out for them as well. Show your loved ones you care by keeping yourself healthy. How many of us have a basic understanding of bloodborne pathogens, common modes of their transmission, prevention methods and pertinent information? You can reasonably anticipate facing contact with blood and/or potentially infectious materials as part of your job duties and daily life.



Bloodborne Pathogens

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms such as viruses or bacteria that are carried in blood and can cause disease in humans.

Hepatitis B (HBV)

Hepatitis means "inflammation of the liver," and, as its name implies, Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver. While there are several different types of hepatitis, Hepatitis B is transmitted primarily through "blood to blood" contact.

Hepatitis B initially causes inflammation of the liver, but can lead to more serious conditions such as cirrhosis and liver cancer.

There is no "cure" or specific treatment for HBV, but many people who contract the disease will develop antibodies, which help them get over the infection and protect them from getting it again. It is

important to note, however, that there are different kinds of hepatitis, so infection with HBV will not stop someone from getting other types.

The Hepatitis B virus is very durable, and it can survive in dried blood for up to seven days. For this reason, this virus is the primary concern for employees such as housekeepers, laundry personnel and other employees who may come in contact with blood or potentially infectious materials in their daily life or work assignments.

Symptoms

The symptoms of HBV are very much like a mild 'flu'. Initially there is a sense of fatigue, possible stomach pain, loss of appetite, and even nausea. As the disease continues to develop, jaundice (a distinct yellowing of the skin and eyes), and darkened urine will often occur. However, people who are

infected with HBV will show no symptoms for some time. After exposure it can take 1-9 months before symptoms become noticeable. Loss of appetite and stomach pain, for example, commonly appear within 1-3 months, but can occur as soon as 2 weeks or as long as 6-9 months after infection.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

AIDS or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, is caused by a virus called the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV. Once a person has been infected with HIV, it may be many years before AIDS actually develops. HIV attacks the body's immune system, weakening it so that it can't fight other deadly diseases. AIDS is a fatal disease, and while treatment for it is improving, there is no cure.

Estimates on the number of people infected with HIV vary, but some estimates suggest that an average of 35,000 people are infected every year in the US (in 2000, 45,000 new infections were reported). It is believed that as of 2000, an estimated 920,000 persons were living with HIV/AIDS in the United States. These numbers could be higher, as many people who are infected with HIV may be completely un-

aware of it. The HIV virus is very fragile and will not survive very long outside of the human body. It is primarily of concern to employees providing first aid or in medical situations involving fresh blood or other potentially infectious materials. Because this is such a devastating disease, all precautions must be taken to avoid exposure.

AIDS infection essentially occurs in three broad stages.

First Stage: When a person is actually infected with HIV. After the initial infection, a person may show few or no signs of illness for many years.

Second Stage: Individual may begin to suffer swollen lymph glands or other lesser diseases, which begin to take advantage of the body's weakened immune system. The second stage is believed to eventually lead to AIDS.

Third Stage: In all cases, in this stage, the body becomes completely unable to fight off life-threatening diseases and infections.

Symptoms

Symptoms of HIV infection can vary, but often include weakness, fever, sore throat, nausea, headaches, diarrhea, a white coating on the tongue, weight loss, and swollen



lymph glands.

Modes of Transmission

Bloodborne pathogens such as HBV and HIV can be transmitted through contact with infected human blood and other potentially infectious body fluids such as:

- * Semen
- * Vaginal Secretions
- * Cerebrospinal Fluid
- * Synovial Fluid
- * Pleural Fluid
- * Peritoneal Fluid
- * Amniotic fluid
- * Saliva (in dental procedures)
- * Any body fluid that is visibly contaminated with blood.

HBV and HIV are most commonly transmitted through:

- * Sexual contact
- * Sharing of hypodermic needles
- * From mothers to their babies at/before birth
- * Accidental puncture from contaminated needles, broken glass, or other sharps
- * Contact between broken or damaged skin and infected body fluids
- * Contact between mucous membranes and infected body fluids

Accidental puncture from contaminated needles and other sharps can



result in transmission of blood-borne pathogens. Unbroken skin forms an impervious barrier against bloodborne pathogens. However, infected blood can enter your system through:

- * Open sores
- * Cuts
- * Abrasions
- * Acne
- * Any sort of damaged or broken skin such as sunburn or blisters

Bloodborne pathogens may also be transmitted through mucous membrane of the:

- * Eyes
- * Nose
- * Mouth

Personal Protective Equipment

It is extremely important to use personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect yourself from bloodborne pathogens.

“**Universal Precautions**” is the name used to describe a prevention strategy in which all blood and potentially infectious materials are treated as if they are, in fact, infectious, regardless of the perceived status of the source individual. On other words, whether or not you think the blood/body fluid is infected with blood-



borne pathogens, ***you treat it as if it is.*** This approach is used in all situations where exposure to blood or potentially infectious materials is possible.

Probably the first thing to do in any situation where you may be exposed to bloodborne pathogens is to ensure you are wearing the appropriate PPE., such as latex or protective gloves. To protect yourself, it is essential to have a barrier between you and the potentially infectious material.

Rules to follow:

- * Always wear personal protective equipment in exposure situations
- * Remove PPE that is torn or punctured, or has lost its ability to function as a barrier to bloodborn pathogens
- * Replace PPE that is torn or punctured
- * Remove PPE before leaving the area

Gloves

Gloves should be made of latex, nitril, rubber, or other water impervious materials. If glove material is thin or flimsy, double gloving can provide an additional layer of protection. Also, if you know you have



cuts or scores on your hands, you should cover these with a bandage or similar protection as an additional precaution before donning your gloves. You should always inspect your gloves for tears or punctures before putting them on. If a glove is damaged, don't use it! When taking contaminated gloves off, do so carefully. Make sure you don't touch the outside of the gloves with any bare skin, and be sure to dispose of them in a proper container so that no one else will come in contact with them, either.

Goggles

Anytime there is a risk of splashing or vaporization of contaminated fluids, goggles and/or other eye protection should be used to protect your eyes. Again, bloodborne pathogens can be transmitted through the thin membranes of the eyes so it is important to protect them. Splashing could occur while cleaning up a spill, during a use of force, or while providing first aid or medical assistance.



Face Shields

Face shields may be worn in addition to goggles to provide additional face



protection. A face shield will protect against splashes to the nose and mouth. area.

Aprons

Aprons may be worn to protect your clothing and to keep blood or other contaminated fluids from soaking through to your skin.



Normal clothing that becomes contaminated with blood should be removed as soon as possible because fluids can seep through the cloth and come in contact with skin. Contaminated laundry should be handled as little as possible, and should be placed in an appropriately labeled bag or container until it is decontaminated,

Remember to use universal precautions and treat all blood or potentially infectious body fluids as they are contaminated. Avoid contact whenever possible, and whenever it's not, wear personal protective equipment.

If you find yourself in a situation where you have come in contact with blood or other body fluids and you don't have any personal protective equipment handy, you can improvise. Use a towel, plastic bag, or some other barrier to help avoid contact.

Hygiene Practices

Hand washing is one of the most important (and easiest) practices used to prevent transmission of bloodborne pathogens. Hands and other exposed skin



should be thoroughly washed as soon as possible following an exposure incident. Use soft, antibacterial soap, if possible. Avoid harsh, abrasive soaps, as those may open fragile scabs or other sores.

Hands should be washed immediately or as soon as feasible) after removal of gloves or other personal protective equipment.

Because hand washing is so important, you should familiarize yourself with the location of a hand washing facility nearest to you. Sinks, public restrooms, or janitor closets. If you are working in an area without access to a hand washing facility, you may use an antiseptic cleaner in conjunction with a clean cloth/paper towel or antiseptic towelettes. If you use an alternative method, hands should be washed with soap and running water as soon as possible. So remember, when considering all the many ways to

express concern for loved ones and co-workers during this time of year, be cautious of the hidden dangers associated with bloodborne pathogens.

Coming together, sharing together, working together, succeeding together.

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