



Definition:

"Universal Precautions are a simple set of effective practices, designed to protect health workers and patients from infection with a range of pathogens, including blood borne viruses. These practices are used when caring for all patients regardless of diagnosis. They are applied universally. It is not feasible or effective to test all patients for all pathogens prior to giving care in order to identify those who are infected and take precautions only with them."

- World Health Organization








Occupational Exposure can result from: needle stick or other sharps injury, splash of blood or other body fluids into eyes, nose or mouth, or blood contact with broken skin. It is important to know your agency's protocol should an exposure occur.

Needle stick injury is the most common form of exposure. Health workers in operating rooms, delivery rooms, emergency rooms and laboratories have an increased risk of exposure.

Cleaners and waste collectors whose duties include handling blood-contaminated items are also at risk.

Make sure you know your immunization status, especially for Hepatitis B.

Checklist:

-  Wash hands after any direct contact with patients, even if gloves were used
-  Collect and dispose of sharps in a puncture and liquid-proof safety box. One box should be placed in each patient area
-  Wear appropriate gloves for direct contact with body fluids, mucous membranes or broken skin (see web link)
-  Wear a mask, eye protection or face shield, and a gown if blood or body fluids might splash
-  Cover all cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing
-  Clean spills of blood and other body fluids as per agency's protocol (see web link)
-  Use a safe system for hospital waste management and disposal

For more information on proper hygiene and sanitation practices, visit this Health Canada website:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/97vol23/23s3/23s3b_e.html#c

**Personal protective equipment should be made available and used by all health workers*

Reference: World Health Organization ♦ Health Canada

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