

safety matters

Toolbox Talks

From your safety partners at Gallagher Risk Management -
Tulsa

Exposure to Infectious Materials

No one expects to come into contact with infectious materials, like blood, on the job site. However, sometimes people are injured on the job and you may need to respond. It is important that you are prepared.

Exposure to blood, body fluids and other potentially infectious materials can be hazardous to your health. Blood and body fluids, for example, may contain bloodborne pathogens—microorganisms that can cause illness and disease. These microorganisms are transmitted through contact with contaminated blood and body fluids.

Dangerous Tasks

There may be times when you need to take extra precautions while performing certain tasks on the job or assisting others who may be ill or injured at work. Some dangerous tasks include those:

- Performed with the use of sharp implements like needles, razor blades, saws and glass
- Requiring contact with blood and other body fluids
- Requiring the handling or disposing of contaminated trash or waste
- Requiring actions of a first responder, like attending to a bleeding victim or performing CPR

Minimizing Exposure

- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when working with blood or infectious materials. Before

using, check PPE for damage. Remove PPE carefully to avoid self-contamination. Dispose of contaminated PPE correctly in leak-proof containers designated specifically for disposal or for decontamination. Make sure you have been trained in the use of PPE and the training has been documented.

- Use good personal hygiene. Wash exposed skin immediately with soap and water. Wash thoroughly after removing PPE. Flush exposed eyes, nose or mouth quickly and thoroughly with water. Cover any open wounds or cuts.
- Use good work practices. Minimize splashing of infectious materials. Clean up spills immediately. Clean and decontaminate all equipment and surfaces in contact with blood or other infectious material. Dispose of sharps in a puncture-proof, labeled container.
- Know the proper response for accidental exposures. Report on-the-job exposures promptly, and seek immediate medical attention.

Responding to Exposure

In the event you experience an exposure to blood, body fluids or other potentially infectious materials, immediately:

- Wash affected area thoroughly
- Report the incident to your supervisor
- Complete an incident report form

You can reduce your chance of an infectious occupational exposure by identifying dangerous tasks, minimizing your risk and knowing what to do if exposed.

- Promptly begin medical follow-up

If you have an exposure incident on the job in which your eyes, mouth, other mucous membrane or broken skin comes into contact with blood or other infectious materials, arrange for an immediate medical evaluation that:

- Documents what happened
- Identifies and tests the source if feasible
- Tests the exposed person's blood, if consent is obtained
- Provides counseling
- Evaluates any reported illness