Bloodborne Pathogens Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Bloodborne pathogens are infectious microorganisms in human blood that can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Needlesticks and other sharps-related injuries may expose workers to bloodborne pathogens. Workers in many occupations, including first responders, housekeeping personnel in some industries, nurses and other healthcare personnel, all may be at risk for exposure to bloodborne pathogens. Bloodborne pathogens are infectious agents that can cause illness and death.

WHAT' S THE DANGER

Many people infected with HBV do not know they have the virus because symptoms can take two to six months to appear and only about 50 percent of people develop symptoms. During this time, they can spread the infection to others.

TRANSMISSION

HBV is spread through contact with infected blood and body fluids including semen and vaginal fluid.

The most common risk factors for HBV infection include:

- Injection drug use (past and/or present) and intranasal drug use (snorting) when sharing contaminated drug-using equipment (e.g., needles, straws pipes, spoons and cookers);
- High-risk sexual activities (e.g., unprotected sex, multiple sexual partners);
- Being born or living in a region where HBV is widespread;
- Being born to a mother with HBV;
- Exposure to blood/blood products in endemic regions without routine infection control measures;
- Use of shared or contaminated medical or dental devices;
- Sharing personal care articles such as razors, scissors, nail clippers or toothbrushes with an infected person;
- Exposure in the workplace by getting pricked by a needle or sharp equipment that had infected blood or body fluids on it;

- Tattooing, body piercing or acupuncture when unsterile equipment or techniques are used; and
- Exposure to blood, blood products or organ transplantation in Canada prior to 1970.

SYMPTOMS OF HEPATITIS B

Symptoms of HBV infection can include some or all of the following: **fatigue, loss of appetite, fever, nausea, vomiting, dark urine, pale stools, stomach pain, joint pain and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes).**

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

IMPLEMENT THE USE OF UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

- Identify and use engineering controls.
- Identify and ensure the use of work practice controls.
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Make available hepatitis B vaccinations to all workers with occupational exposure.
- Make available post-exposure evaluation and follow-up to any occupationally exposed worker who experiences an exposure incident.
- Use labels and signs to communicate hazards.
- Provide information and training to workers.

PROTECTION

Hepatitis B vaccination is the best way to protect yourself against becoming infected.

PRECAUTIONS

- Avoid sharing needles/syringes, spoons, drug solutions or water, filters, cookers, pipes, straws used for snorting drugs, and other drug related equipment. Cleaning with bleach may not kill HBV;
- Practice safer sex. Use condoms/dental dams to reduce the risk of acquiring sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs) including HBV;
- Avoid dental, medical or cosmetic procedures that penetrate the skin (e.g., transfusions, acupuncture, piercing or tattooing) unless you are certain that the needles, materials and equipment are sterile;
- Wear latex gloves if you are likely to be in contact with someone else’s blood or bodily fluids;
- Don’t share personal items like razors, scissors, nail clippers or toothbrushes; and
- Be especially careful when travelling abroad in countries where HBV is widespread.

FINAL WORD

Bloodborne pathogens are infectious microorganisms in human blood that cause disease in humans. These are infectious agents that can cause illness and death. Take the recommended precautions to stay safe and protect yourself form contracting Hepatitis B.