

IT'S UP TO US – BUILDING A SAFER WORK PLACE THROUGH UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS¹

Five years ago “universal precautions” was a term few workers knew. Today, for many AFT members, these words mean safety on the job.

Applied consistently (each time) and correctly, they are your best protection against infection from viruses, and bacteria that are blood borne (found in blood and body fluids containing blood) such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B (HBV) and Hepatitis C (HCV).

Your employer must provide protective equipment and training in its use. The responsibility to use it is yours.

You have the right to a safe workplace, training and information about infection and how to protect yourself from exposure at school. This fact sheet packet provides information on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s Blood borne Pathogen Standard, using universal precautions at work, handling situations involving children with special needs and enforcing safety standards at your school.

If you have questions, please direct them to the Occupational Safety and Health Program at 1-800-238-1133, ext. 5674 or 4365.

¹This Fact Sheet draft is produced by AFT’s Occupational Safety and Health Department and the HIV/AIDS Education Project under Cooperative Agreement U 63/CCU306543-02-03.

WORK
shouldn't
HURT

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS ENFORCING EMPLOYEE RIGHTS AND EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITY

Your employer is responsible for providing you with:

- a work-site exposure control panel describing how to prevent transmission risks;
- proper protective equipment and training in its use;
- Hepatitis B vaccine at no cost;
- A post-exposure plan that describes what to do in the event of a serious exposure to blood or body fluid on the job; and
- Annual training on blood borne diseases (HIV, HBV, etc.) including modes of transmission, effective preventive measures and exposure-control plans.

You and your union local can work together to monitor your worksite, make sure these materials and procedures are in place, and bring violations to the attention of your employer.

If these standards are not being met in your worksite, your union can assist you in filing a complaint with OSHA (if you are in an OSHA-plan state) or with the local health or labor department charged with monitoring the safety of the worksite. The Office of Safety and Health of American Federation of Teachers can assist your local in raising awareness of the situation and resolving problems with the appropriate agency. Contact the director at 1-800-238-1133, ext. 5674 for further information.

Learning about the diseases that you may be exposed to at work is a powerful tool for controlling their spread. Information on HIV, Hepatitis B and other worksite hazards can be obtained from the AFT Office of Safety and Health at the number cited above.¹¹

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**UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS
WORK-SITE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES
WASTE DISPOSAL PROCEDURES**

You must properly dispose of the materials you have used as barriers to prevent contact with blood or body fluids containing blood in order to prevent others from risking possible exposure and infection.

- Place disposable soiled materials, such as paper towels, towelettes, spatulas, tissues and gloves, in a lined trash container.
- Remove the liner from the waste container as often as possible, tie it and dispose of the bag following the trash disposal procedures specified at your school.
- Pick up contaminated objects that are sharp - - such as needles, knives, razor blades, and broken glass – using a tool such as pliers or forceps. Place the objects in a puncture-proof waste container. **Never** pick up sharp objects with your hands nor place these items in a plastic trash bag, which could be punctured, causing possible injury to students or other personnel.
- Materials that can be reused should be placed in plastic bags/puncture-proof containers until laundering in warm water with soap and an appropriate bleach solution.
- Wash your hands.⁶

⁶This Fact Sheet draft is produced by AFT's Occupational Safety and Health Department and the HIV/AIDS Education Project under Cooperative Agreement U 63/CCU306543-02-03.

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS WORK-SITE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Accidents in the school setting do not always occur when universal precautions materials are accessible. In the absence of equipment, you can follow these simple steps:

- Help injured/ill persons to care for him/herself (themselves). For example, help an injured student to cover his/her own bloody nose and apply pressure. Show the student how to clean up any body fluids that are spilled on clothes or the skin.
- If you must render assistance, place a barrier object between yourself and the body fluid. This object could be a piece of clothing, paper towel or tissue.
- Dispose of any barrier materials in a lined waste container. In the case of reusable materials, make certain they are laundered in warm water with soap and an appropriate bleach solution.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water. Your clean, intact skin is your best protection against disease.
- If you encounter a potentially contaminated object - - such as hypodermic needle, knife, razor blade, other sharp object or a used condom - - pick it up with a tool such as forceps or tweezers. NEVER touch it with your hand. Place the sharp item in a puncture-proof container and other items in a lined waste container.⁹

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UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS RESOURCES

- on HIV transmission, prevention, testing and treatment:

National AIDS Hotline *1-800-342-2437*

CDC National AIDS Clearinghouse *1-800-458-5231*

- on the nature and use of universal precautions and other worksite hazards:

**AFT Occupational Health and
Safety Program** **1-800-238-1133, ext. 5674 or 4365**

*National Institute for Occupational
Safety and Health Administration*¹² **1-800-356-4674**

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UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS WORK-SITE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

HAND PROTECTION

HANDWASHING PROCEDURES

- Check that each hand sink is supplied with a soap dispenser, soap and disposable paper towels. Germicidal towelettes should be provided if water is not available.
- Wet hands thoroughly under warm running water; use cold water only if warm water is unavailable.
- Dispense soap into wet hands. Bar soap should be used if dispensed soap is unavailable.
- Vigorously rub hands together for one minute, paying particular attention to nails, cuticles, spaces between fingers and under jewelry. The friction that occurs by rubbing the hands together destroys viruses. Wash hands above the wrist.
- Thoroughly rinse hands.
- Shake hands to remove excess water.
- Dry hands using a disposable towel. Avoid using non-disposable towels.
- After drying hands, **use the towel to turn off the water.**
- Dispose of paper towel following disposal procedures.

DISPOSAL GLOVES PROCEDURES

- Maintain a supply of disposable (latex and vinyl) gloves of various sizes in accessible locations. Check the glove supply for expiration dates.
- Slip each hand into a clean glove, pulling it snugly over the fingers to ensure a good fit. Pull glove over the wrist as far as it will go to maximize coverage.

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- Use a clean pair of gloves for each person and each incident. **Do not reuse gloves.**
- To remove gloves without contaminating yourself, pull off the first glove turning it inside out as it is pulled over the hand. Grasping the first glove in remaining glove hand, pull the second glove over the hand containing the used glove, which will effectively seal the first glove inside.
- Dispose of the used gloves in a lined waste container.
- Wash your hands.⁵

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UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS: PREVENTING BLOODBORNE INFECTIONS AT SCHOOL

Avoiding disease transmission (passing a germ or virus from one person to another) on the job is possible. It requires that you know about the diseases, to what extent you might be exposed to or might come in contact with an infected person, and, that you use a consistent approach to reduce possible risks. Consistent means that you follow the same steps **each time for each person**. These steps are called universal precautions because **they apply to everyone and to each possibility for exposure that you have**.

There are blood borne viruses such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Hepatitis B that can be passed to people who come in contact with infected blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breast and breast milk. Saliva has been found to carry and transmit the Hepatitis B virus.

The risk of becoming infected with a blood borne disease like Hepatitis B or HIV depends on:

- how often you are exposed to blood or body fluid;
- how much of the material you come in contact with;
- how much virus is contained in the fluid you touch; and
- whether you have an entry point into your bloodstream, such as a cut or mucous membrane (eye, nose, mouth, etc.).

You can prevent infection by avoiding contact with blood or body fluids. **“Universal precautions” mean using barriers to stop a virus from passing from one person to another.**

For instance, you can use gloves and paper towels to prevent contact between skin and possibly contaminated materials. You need to be sure that prompt and proper cleaning steps are used to decontaminate the surface and remove the danger that others might touch the blood or body fluid.

Your employer is responsible for providing the equipment and training needed to perform universal precautions steps.

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Your employer should provide:

- access to hand sinks;
- hot and cold running water, soap and paper towels;
- gloves, gowns, masks and other items that serve as appropriate barriers between you and contaminated fluids; and
- hospital-grade disinfectants to 10 percent bleach solution.

Kits of universal precautions materials should be assembled and placed throughout the school and accessible to all staff and work areas. Each staff member should know where the materials are located. The contents of the kits must be replenished regularly.

The job of preventing an infection requires you to be prepared to protect yourself and the students with whom you come in contact. It requires teamwork with your colleagues and your employer to keep the work site safe for everyone. ⁴

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UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS WORK-SITE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES CLEAN-UP PROCEDURES

SURFACES (floors, walls, countertops)

- Wear disposable gloves
- Sprinkle disinfecting absorbent over spills, and wipe surrounding surfaces with a paper towel. If absorbent powder is not available spread paper toweling over spill and allow it to soak up the fluid.
- Dispose of the material in a lined waste container.
- Spray the affected area with a cleaner/disinfectant such as any hospital-grade tuberculoidal and germicidal product. A 10 percent bleach solution is an acceptable disinfectant.
- After allowing one minute of contact time, wipe the disinfectant from the surface.
- Draw the plastic liner out of the waste container. Tie and immediately dispose of the bag, following school trash-disposal procedures.
- Wash your hands.

OBJECTS

- Put on disposable gloves. If gloves are not available, use disposable towels as a barrier when handling the object.
- Wash object using clean, warm water, a general-purpose cleaning agent, and sponges or cloths set-aside for that purpose only.
- Rinse the object thoroughly in clean water.

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- Disinfect or sanitize the object by spraying, swabbing or immersing in a germicidal solution. A 10 percent bleach solution or commercially available disinfectant is adequate. Objects that might be placed in a person's mouth should be rinsed in clean water following this disinfection procedure.

PERSONS/CLOTHING

Urge the affected person to perform as many of these procedures him/herself as possible. If you must help the individual:

- Put on disposable gloves.
- Use a paper towel to wipe material from exposed skin. Allow person to rinse mouth, nose and eyes with running water. Germicidal towelettes should be used on skin areas if running water is not available.
- Dispose of the soiled towels or towelettes.
- Remove soiled clothing and place in a plastic bag for laundering later, in warm water with soap and appropriate bleach solution.
- Cleanse the affected body area. Assist the person to put on clean clothing.
- Dispose of gloves and soiled towels.
- Remove the lining from the waste container. Tie it and immediately dispose of the bag, following your school's specified procedures.
- Wash your hands.

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CLEANING EQUIPMENT

Reusable cleaning supplies need to be disinfected after each use. Equipment handles, maps, rags and sponges should be rinsed in a 10 percent bleach solution. Items that are laundered should be washed in warm water with soap and an appropriate bleach solution. Tools such as brooms, dustpans, pliers, and tweezers should be disinfected and dried.⁷

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**UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS
WORK-SITE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES
SPECIAL NEEDS – SPECIAL PROCEDURES**

Many school personnel assist students with disabilities who require special medical procedures as part of their daily school routine. These include intubations, catheterizations, suctioning, injection therapy, inhalation therapy, ostomy care, postural drainage, seizure care, oral and rectal medication, urine tests and blood tests. For each of these, you must have hot and cold running water, gloves and proper clean-up materials, disinfectants and disposal bags.

A few procedures require specialized protective gear to prevent you from getting splashed with blood or body fluids containing blood.

- **Gowns** that cover exposed areas of the arms, legs and torso should be worn when dealing with suctioning and ostomy care. A clean gown should be used each time and discard at the end of the procedure in the appropriate disposal (paper gown) or laundry areas (cloth gown).
- **Face shields** (plastic shields covering the face from forehead to below chin) protects you from the possibility of splashes to eye, nose or mouth mucous membranes.
- **Goggles** are plastic glasses that cover the eye area and prevent membrane contact.
- **Masks** are multilayered cloth and paper products that cover mouth and nose membranes. New masks should be used each time. Goggles and shields require cleaning and disinfecting between uses.

The following chart lists, by procedure, the materials and controls that should be in place.

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You should never perform any of these procedures unless:

- proper training on the procedure is given so that you feel comfortable in performing it;
- a written order from the student’s physician (and school nurse if other school personnel are expected to perform the task) is given.

PROCEDURE	MATERIALS/CONTROLS
Intubations/shunts	Gloves, cleaning materials, disposal bags, hot and cold running water
Catheterizations	Gloves cleaning materials, disposal bags, hot and cold running water
Suctioning	Gloves, face shields/goggles, emergency medial equipment, disposal bags/container, hot and cold running water
Injection therapy	Gloves, self-sheathing needles, hot and cold running water, sharps container, disposal bags
Inhalation therapy	Good ventilation/air circulation, masks
Ostomy care	Gloves, gown, cleaning materials, disposal bags, hot and cold running water
Postural drainage	Gloves, cleaning materials, disposal bags
Seizure care	Gloves cleaning materials disposal bags, hot and cold running water
Medication – oral	Gloves hot and cold running water
Medication – rectal	Gloves, cleaning materials, disposal bags, hot and cold running water
Urine tests	Gloves, cleaning materials, disposal bags, hot and cold running water
Blood tests	Gloves, cleaning materials, disposal bags and sharps containers, hot and cold running water

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If you have questions or concerns about these procedures, contact AFT Occupational Health and Safety Program, ext. 5674.¹⁰

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THE OSHA BLOODBORNE STANDARD AND HIV DISEASE WORK-SITE SAFETY AND HEALTH

OSHA BLOODBONE DISEASE STANDARD

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) developed a standard for work-site prevention of blood borne pathogen transmission in 1992. The OSHA standard covers all private sector workers and public workers in state-plan OSHA states² who “reasonably anticipate skin, eye, mucous membrane or parenteral contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials.” Under this standard, **employers must:**

- develop a **work-site exposure control plan** that describes:
 - what jobs are at risk for exposure;
 - methods to reduce/eliminate chances of infection(when exposures occur);
 - training on avoiding or reducing exposure risks;
 - a program of Hepatitis B vaccination for covered employees; and,
 - methods of record keeping for the standard.
- provide adequate and accessible protective clothing and equipment;
- provide Hepatitis B vaccine at no cost to employees expected to come in contact with infectious materials;
- develop a post-exposure plan that includes confidential medical evaluation and counseling after a work-site contact with infected materials; and
- provide annual training on blood borne diseases, including modes of transmission, effective preventive measures and work-site exposure control plans, through a knowledge instructor.

You have a right to:

- see the work-site exposure plan;

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- receive Hepatitis B vaccine free of charge, if your job is designated as at risk for exposure to infectious materials;
- receive proper protective equipment and training in its use;
- an investigation of any work-site exposure you may have, including identifying and requesting voluntary testing of the exposed individual and receiving copies of any medical evaluation performed.

To obtain more information on the OSHA Standard, contact your union representative or contact OSHA at 1-800-356-4674.

HOW CAN THE UNION HELP?

AFT locals strive to protect workers across the country from occupational transmission of diseases like Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Hepatitis B. Joint union-management occupational safety and health programs are one way to protect workers. An effective program starts with a joint union-management committee that:

- develops training for all employees on safety and health issues, including rights under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (1970);
- guarantees accessible supplies and equipment for all employees, to be provided by the employer;
- investigates incidents of exposure; and
- regularly contacts health agencies for updates on regulations.

Contact the AFT Office of Health and Safety at 1-800-238-1133, ext. 5674 about establishing a committee at your school and sample contract language.³

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**UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS
WORK-SITE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES
TOILETING NEEDS**

DIAPERING

- Assemble the supplies beforehand. Use disposable diapers.
- Wash your hands.
- Put on disposable gloves.
- Place the child on a designated, washable changing table or mat located near a hand sink and used for no other purpose. The use of a disposable paper liner is optional.
- Do not leave the child unattended on the changing table.
- Remove clothing as necessary. Remove the soiled diaper, carefully folding inward and wrapping the diaper in its own plastic liner.
- Put the soiled diaper in a small plastic bag, and place it in a covered waste container.
- Cleanse the person's skin with a disposable wipe and an appropriate cleaning solution or a moist towelette. Move from front to back to prevent urinary-tract infections, paying particular attention to skin creases.
- Dispense bulk salves, creams or ointments from containers using a disposable spatula. Do not use your fingers to dispense the materials. Squeeze-tubes or squeeze-bottles of these products are preferred.
- Put the child's clothes back on.
- Dispose of spatulas in an appropriate waste container.
- Remove gloves and dispose of them.

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- Wash child's hands with soap and water or wipe with a germicidal towelette if running water is not available.
- Disinfect the changing table or mat surface, and wipe it dry with a paper towel.
- Dispose of towels and towelettes.
- Wash your hands.

TOILETING

- Put on disposable gloves if you assist in wiping the person or if you will come in contact with body fluids.
- Assist with the removal of clothing if necessary.
- Using toilet tissue, a disposable wipe and an appropriate cleaning solution or a moist, germicidal towelette, wipe person moving from front to back to prevent a urinary-tract infection.
- Assist with re-dressing if necessary.
- Remove and dispose of your gloves.
- Ensure that the person washes his/her hands properly.
- Wash your hands.

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POTTY CHAIR

When using the potty-chair, follow this procedure after the child is dressed but before removing your gloves:

- Empty the contents of the pot into the toilet.
- Rinse the pot with water. Dispose of the rinse water into the toilet. If rinse water is obtained from the hand sink, be sure to splash the sink or faucet.
- Clean the pot with a germicidal solution. Wipe it with a paper towel. Dispose of the paper towel in a lined waste container.
- Remove the disposed of your gloves.
- Disinfect the hand sink.
- Wash your hands.
- Repeat these procedures for each child.
- Potty seats should be cleaned with a germicidal solution at least once a day.
- Dispose of waste materials as specified by your school.⁸

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