

OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens - Questions and Answers

Course 115
Record 864

Rationale

Exposure to bloodborne pathogens can potentially cause serious harm to yourself. It is important to understand the dangers and how to protect yourself and others.

What are Bloodborne Pathogens?

Very small organisms consisting mostly of viruses, bacteria and parasites that can cause diseases when they enter the human blood stream. The AIDS and Hepatitis B viruses are the greatest concern because there currently is no cure for either disease.

What is Work Place Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens?

Occurs when the blood of an infected person enters the body of another non-infected person through:

- A skin break (open cut or wound) of a non-infected person;
- Skin punctures from contaminated needles and sharps;
- Bites and scratches that break the skin, or;
- Blood or body fluid splashes to the eyes.

What is Exposure Prevention to Bloodborne Pathogens?

Employees can protect themselves from exposure to blood borne pathogens by:

- Using good hand washing technique during performance of their jobs;
- Wearing protective gloves when performing those tasks which may result in possible skin contact with blood or body fluids (Job requirement);
- Avoiding eating and drinking of food and fluids in the work areas, and;
- Avoiding applying personal cosmetics while in the work area.

What are Some Examples of an Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens?

- A puncture wound of the skin with a used injection needle or a sharp such as a razor blade;
- A human bite in which the skin is broken;
- Cleaning a large blood spill without wearing gloves, or;
- Splashing blood in your eyes during the process of brushing someone's teeth.

What Should a Person Do After a Possible Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens?

- Wash the site with soap and water for 3 - 5 minutes;
- Eyes: Flush eyes with water for 10 minutes;
- Contact the nurse on the household or another nurse in St. Michael or Seneca, and;
- Complete an accident report.

Hepatitis B - What is it?

An inflammation of the liver caused by a virus. It is spread by contact with the blood and/or body fluids of a person infected with the Hepatitis B Virus.

How does Exposure to Hepatitis B occur?

- Sexual contact: Through the exchange of semen and/or vaginal fluid from an infected person to a non - infected person;
- Saliva through human bites in which the skin broken;
- Spitting: saliva from an infected person enters the eye of a non-infected person;
- Blood from an infected person enters a break in the skin of a non-infected person, or;
- IV drug users sharing needles.
- Incubation period (from the time of exposure to the onset of symptoms) 6 weeks to 6 months.
- Contagion period: Onset of symptoms through recovery. Some people become life long carriers who remain contagious through out the remainder of their life.

What are Symptoms and Development of Hepatitis B?

- Symptoms are: fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, extreme tiredness and yellowing of the eye balls and skin. Recovery is several months. There is no cure. This disease must run its course. Rest, proper nutrition and the elimination of drugs and alcohol is highly recommended.

What are Some Hepatitis B Prevention Practices?

- Use good hand washing technique;
- Wear gloves when working with blood and body fluids;
- In your private life practice safe sexual habits such as:
 - Know your sex partner's prior sexual behavior;
 - Limit your sexual relationships to one person, and;
 - Use condoms.

- Do not share needles;
- Obtain the Hepatitis B Vaccine.

AIDS - What is AIDS?

- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome: A disease caused by a virus which attacks and destroys the body's immune system.
- The immune system is the body's protection and defense against disease.
- Infection with the AIDS virus is called HIV Positive.

How does Exposure to AIDS Occur?

- Sexual contact: Through the exchange of semen and/or vaginal fluid from an infected person to a non-infected person;
- Blood from an infected person enters a break in the skin of a non-infected person;
- IV drug users sharing needles;
- Infected mother to an unborn child, or;
- Infected mother to a breast feeding infant.

What are AIDS Symptoms and Development?

- Infection with the AIDS virus can occur on the first exposure. Once infected, a person is contagious for life.
- There is no cure, there is no preventative vaccine. Infection with the AIDS virus may eventually be fatal.

Symptoms: 2 to 6 months after exposure, a 1 to 14 day period of fever, night sweats, loss of appetite, weight loss of >20 lbs., extreme tiredness and swollen glands in the neck, arm pits and groin areas. This is followed by a 2 to 5 year period of relative good health, followed by the onset of many and severe infections which may result in death. Life expectancy after infection with the AIDS virus is 5 to 10 years, with an almost certain poor quality of life after 5 years due to the repeated and severe infections.

What are Some AIDS Prevention Practices?

- Use good hand washing technique;
- Wear gloves when working with blood and body fluids;
- In your private life, practice safe sexual habits:
 - Know sex partner's prior sexual behavior;
 - Limit your sexual relationships to one person, and;

Use condoms.

- Do not share needles.

If you have any questions regarding any of this information, please ask any of the RN's.