



# safety focus

## Bloodborne Pathogens

If you work with or around blood and body fluids, you may be exposed to bloodborne pathogens, including HIV, hepatitis B and C, and others. These diseases are caused by pathogenic material that has been transmitted by exchange of body fluids.

Most transmission of bloodborne pathogens occurs through risky personal behaviors, but transmission in the workplace is possible if skin is punctured by a contaminated sharp, or when broken skin or mucous membrane is splashed with blood or a body fluid.

Needlesticks are the most common cause for work-related bloodborne pathogen infections, however many factors affect whether an exposure results in an infection. These include the amount of blood or fluid involved; the severity and depth of the injury; an individual's predisposition to infection; and the disease stage of the source.

The law guarantees your rights to a safe and healthful workplace. Employees who have contact with blood or infectious materials have specific rights under the **OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard**. Included are free hepatitis-B vaccination, personal protective equipment, immediate medical evaluation following exposures, confidential medical treatment, and education.

OHSU insists that **Standard Precautions** be practiced institution-wide: employees must know which materials are potentially infectious; special containers are provided for sharps disposal; hazards are eliminated when possible; and employees are trained prior to work, and annually, about hazards.

**Immediately report all exposures** to your supervisor and comply with post-exposure follow-up procedures. **Don't wait... immediate action for any necessary medical treatment is critical!** Reporting is also essential for establishing a claim for Workers' Compensation benefits.

Training in Bloodborne Pathogens is required for anyone with potential exposures.

The OHSU Healthcare System has Infection Control Plans and training in place that describe procedures in clinical settings. Questions about these may be routed to Infection Control at 503 494-6694.

