Workers in many different occupations are at risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens. OSHA estimates that 5.6 million workers in the health care industry and related occupations are at risk of occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens, including HIV, hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and others. First aid team members and housekeeping personnel in some settings are other examples of workers who may be at risk of exposure. In 1991, OSHA issued the Bloodborne Pathogens Standard to protect workers from this risk.

**WHAT ARE BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS**

Pathogens are disease-carrying bacteria or viruses. Bloodborne pathogens are bacteria or viruses that exist in blood or other body fluids. If you come into contact with blood or other body fluids, you run the risk of contracting:

- AIDS
- HIV (the virus that causes AIDS)
- Hepatitis B
- HBV (the virus that can lead to hepatitis)

**DISPELLING THE MYTHS**

Casual contact with a person who has HIV or HBV will not harm you. HIV and HBV cannot be transmitted through:

- Sneezing or coughing
- Shaking hands or hugging
- Sharing water fountains, restrooms, or work equipment.

The most common ways these viruses are transmitted are:

- Sexual contact
- Sharing needles (IV drug use)
- Direct contact between broken skin and infected body fluids
- Being stuck by an infected needle

**BLOODBORNE PATHOGEN PROGRAM (BBP)**

Edgewood College’s bloodborne pathogen program provides protection and knowledge for employees who may have occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens.

Edgewood College will take feasible and practical steps to protect employees who may come in contact with bloodborne pathogens.

Edgewood College has made a determination of job classifications in which employees may be expected to incur such occupational exposure, regardless of frequency.

The job classifications that may incur occupational exposure (the “Exposure Group”) are:

1. Athletics (coaches-contact sports)
2. Campus Health Nurse
3. Clinical Nursing Faculty
4. Environmental, Health, Safety and Risk staff
5. Facilities Operations staff
6. Resident Advisors
7. Director and Asst. Director of Resident Life
8. Security
9. Dining Services

Our BBP program can be found on the Environmental Health, Safety and Risk SharePoint, [http://my.edgewood.edu/sites/services/ehs/default.aspx](http://my.edgewood.edu/sites/services/ehs/default.aspx) or at the EHSR office in Sonderegger 113B.

**TRAINING**

Edgewood College shall ensure that annual training is provided to employees in the Exposure Group.

All employees are provided an overview of the BBP program as part of new hire orientation.

**EXPOSURE CONTROL**

Primary methods to reduce the risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens in the workplace include the following:

**Engineering Controls**

Puncture-resistant disposal containers and resuscitation bags are considered engineering controls because the source is isolated or removed.

**Employee Work Practices**

Hand washing and personal hygiene are controls that reduce the likelihood of exposure to bloodborne pathogens.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
Gloves, masks, gowns/coveralls, protective eyewear are specialized clothing and equipment that must be worn by the employee to protect against exposure.

Housekeeping
Working surfaces must be cleaned and decontaminated with a germicidal or hypochlorite solution as soon as possible after body fluid contact.

Hepatitis B Vaccine
Edgewood College shall provide the hepatitis B vaccine and vaccination series at no cost to employees after any potential workplace exposure to bloodborne pathogens. Personal protective equipment, such as gloves and CPR mouth masks, shall be in first aid kits and shall be used by Edgewood College employees to eliminate or minimize exposure to bloodborne pathogens. Work practice controls, such as hand washing and avoiding contaminated sharp objects, shall also be used to reduce exposure.

Universal Precautions
Universal precautions are based on the assumption that human blood and certain human body fluids are infected with bloodborne pathogens and that it is impossible to identify every person who may transmit infection. Only one exposure may be necessary to cause infection. Universal precautions shall be used to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials.

The following is a summary of the universal precautions:

- Barrier protection, such as gloves, masks, protective eyewear, gowns, or aprons, shall be worn when contact with blood or other body fluids are expected.
- Hands and other exposed skin shall be washed immediately and thoroughly if contaminated with blood or other body fluids. Hands shall also be washed immediately after gloves are removed.
- Injuries caused by sharp instruments or materials must be prevented. Sharp instruments or materials shall not be handled if contaminated with blood or other body fluids. These shall be swept up using a broom and dustpan. All sharps shall be disposed of in sharps containers.

- Although saliva has not been implicated in HIV transmission, to minimize the risk of exposure during emergency mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, bags or other ventilation devices shall be available.

Reporting an Exposure Incident
The employee and supervisor shall complete a Hazardous Exposure Incident Report, which can be found at the EHSR office in Sonderegger 113B.
- Following a report of an exposure incident, the exposed employee shall immediately receive a confidential medical evaluation and follow-up.

Waste Disposal
The OSHA definition for regulated waste is liquid or semi-liquid blood or other potentially infectious materials; contaminated items that would release blood or other potentially infectious materials in a liquid or semi-liquid state if compressed; items that are caked with dried blood or other potentially infectious materials and are capable of releasing these materials during handling; contaminated sharps; and pathological microbiological wastes containing blood or other potentially infectious materials. Regulated waste must be placed in containers that are closeable and constructed to contain all contents and prevent leakage of fluids during handling, storage, transportation, or shipping. Edgewood College shall use red biohazard disposal bags printed in black with the universal biohazard symbol and "Caution Biohazard." Disposal of all regulated waste shall be in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

Bloodborne Pathogens do not have to be a scary subject. If we all panic every time someone cuts a finger, we’re only adding to the problem. The key is to remain calm and take the precautions illustrated above.

If you have any questions on this month’s topic or any health and safety-related issue, please contact Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Specialist (EHSR), at 608.663.6709.