

Infectious Disease Training

PATHOGENS

A pathogen is a disease-producing organism that enters the body through the skin or the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth. Once a pathogen enters the body, the body's immune system begins to fight the disease. Blood borne pathogens are bacteria and viruses present in blood and body fluids that can cause disease in humans. Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV, and MRSA are examples of blood borne pathogens.

HEPATITIS

- Hepatitis B is a contagious liver infection caused by the Hepatitis B virus. Hepatitis B is typically spread when the blood, semen, or other body fluids from a person infected with Hepatitis B enter the body of someone else. Hepatitis B is NOT spread through common contact or from the breast milk of an infected individual. There is a vaccine available to protect you from contracting Hepatitis B. Symptoms of Hepatitis B include: fatigue, vomiting, abdominal pain, loss of appetite and jaundice (as the disease progresses). Some medications are available to help treat symptoms of Hepatitis B, but they only work 90% of the time.
- Hepatitis C is a contagious liver infection caused by the Hepatitis C virus. This is the most common chronic blood borne pathogen in the United States. Hepatitis C is primarily transmitted when the blood of an infected person enters the body of an individual who is not infected. One myth of Hepatitis C is that it is commonly spread by getting tattoos. Symptoms of Hepatitis C are similar to those of Hepatitis B. There is not vaccination against Hepatitis C and treatment is only 40% effective.

HIV

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is an infection that destroys your body's immune system which can lead to the development of AIDS. HIV is most often transmitted through intercourse, sharing of needles, or from mother to child through childbirth or breastfeeding. Late stage symptoms may include: fever, fatigue, diarrhea, skin rashes, night sweats, loss of appetite, swollen lymph glands and significant weight loss.

MRSA

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus or MRSA is a type of staph infection that is resistant to some antibiotics. One in three people have "staph", a very common germ, on their skin or in their nose. This is of little consequence unless you have other health conditions that are making you sick or you are being treated with antibiotics that the staph is resistant to. MRSA is spread by touching the items of a person who is infected with MRSA or touching the hands of people who have cared for someone with MRSA. There are antibiotics that treat MRSA and in some extreme cases people may need surgery to drain the infection. Washing your hands and keeping personal items clean is the best way to prevent the spread of MRSA.

PREVENTION

- The key to infection control is PREVENTION.
- Staff must practice “UNIVERSAL PRECAUTION”. Universal precautions is a concept of blood borne disease control which requires that all human blood and other potentially infectious material be treated as if there is a possibility to be infectious for regardless of the perceived “low risk” of the patient.
- Staff must wear personal protective equipment (PPE) whenever they may come into contact with a potentially infectious body fluid.(gloves, CPR mask).
- Staff must also use engineering controls or devices that are developed to prevent the transmission of potentially infections materials. (bio-hazard bags, self-sheething needles, sharps containers).
- Staff must wash their hands frequently, always after glove removal and after client contact.
- The home must be cleaned and disinfected. The disinfectant must be able to kill viruses as well as bacteria. Follow the label guidelines for disinfecting. Staff may also use a combination of 1 part bleach and 10 parts water.

REPORTING

- If you have been exposed to a potentially infectious body fluid, you must report it to your supervisor or homeowner immediately and write an incident report.
- You should contact your physician or go to the local emergency room/urgent care as soon as possible.