

A Brief Look at Exposure Control Airborne/ Bloodborne Pathogens

As a health care worker, you are exposed to airborne and bloodborne pathogens in the everyday tasks you perform for your patients. These pathogens are spread just as their names tell us:

- “Airborne” means the pathogens are in the air and they can enter your body just by breathing them in; and,
- “Bloodborne” means they are in the blood and can be passed on to you through direct contact.
- This definition includes contact with moist body substances and other body fluids such as urine, saliva, vomit, pus, feces and drainage.

Some tasks that you do for your patient carry a higher risk than others for exposure to pathogens. You need to be aware of these to protect other patients, your family and yourself. They include, but are not limited to:

- Blood sugar checks by finger stick;
- All venipunctures;
- Dressing changes;
- Removal of fecal impaction;
- Emptying/changing urinary drainage bags, colostomy bags and wound drainage devices; and,
- Bathing patients who have urine or feces on their skin.

Standard precautions have been set up to help you cut down on his/her chance of exposure to the pathogens. The first step is to assume that all patients are infectious and then to take precautions that include:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 30 seconds before and after any care to a patient, before putting gloves on and after taking them off, before cooking and after using the restroom.
- Wear gloves when you have direct contact with moist body substances or the fluids mentioned above.
- Wear gloves if you have cuts, abrasions, puncture wounds or a hangnail on your hand(s).
- Use face masks, eye protection and disposable gowns when there's a potential for splashing blood or other infectious materials.
- All sharps must be left uncapped and disposed of immediately.

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Quiz

Employee: _____ Date: _____

Graded By (RN): _____ Grade: _____

1. I am exposed to airborne and bloodborne pathogens in the everyday tasks I do for my patient.
 - a) True
 - b) False
2. All of these are high risk tasks for exposure to airborne or bloodborne pathogens: cooking, dressing changes and emptying the garbage.
 - a) True
 - b) False
3. Standard precautions mean that I assume all patients are infectious.
 - a) True
 - b) False
4. One standard precaution is that I should wash my hands before putting on gloves.
 - a) True
 - b) False