

Knowledge is Empowerment - Bloodborne Pathogens -

(Safety during medical emergencies)

Responding to medical emergencies – don't make the incident worse!

Medical emergencies are infrequent, but can occur almost anywhere - in the office, on work sites, on the streets, or at home. Preparation for them is important both to the victim and to anyone responding to the incident. A few safety precautions can ensure your personal safety and health during an incident. An admonishment often used in training first responders is “**don't become a victim.**” This applies to the casual “Good Samaritan” as well as the professional.

What are Bloodborne Pathogens?

Bloodborne pathogens are disease-producing microorganisms present in human blood that can cause disease in humans. You have probably noticed a change in the last few years in the way that medical personnel interact with you during medical treatment. Safety glasses, disposable gloves, disposable medical supplies, and focused medical procedures are all standard methods to limit the health care worker's exposure to your blood and other bodily fluids.

How do I protect myself against exposure in an emergency situation?

Always presume blood and other bodily fluids contain disease-producing microorganisms (concept called “universal precautions”). Universal precautions involve the use of protective barriers such as gloves, gowns, aprons, masks, or protective eyewear. These devices can reduce the risk of exposure to your skin or mucous membranes to potentially infectious agents. If trained in first aid and C.P.R., follow the instructions given during the training to protect yourself while performing these activities.

Some general considerations when faced with a first aid incident or a spill of blood and/or other body fluids

- Remember to use universal precautions - **treat** all human blood and other bodily fluids **as if they are** known to be **infected** with a bloodborne pathogen.
- If you discover a spill of blood or other bodily fluid, **warn** your co-workers in the area **and notify** your supervisor or ES&H representative so that the spill can be safely removed.
- When rendering aid to an injured or sick co-worker, make every effort to ensure that you **do not come in contact with blood or other bodily fluids.**
- If an injured person has a bleeding wound, hand them a clean cloth so **they can apply pressure to their own wound.**
- If you are exposed to blood or other bodily fluids, **immediately and carefully wash the area with soap and water.** Follow-up medical attention may be recommended depending on the circumstances.

Resources:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/bp_universal_precautions.html

http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=10051

