

Dear OUHSC Student:

The mission of the Student Health & Wellness Clinic (SHWC) is to empower each student to pursue optimum health and well-being in a manner that supports academic success. Students pursuing their degree in healthcare-related fields face unique challenges including the risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens such as hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The providers and staff at the SHWC have been trained in the management of blood/bodily fluid exposure per OUHSC protocol. In the event of an exposure, our staff will respond promptly to ensure appropriate assessment and treatment.

**How can I prevent an exposure?**

Many needle sticks and other cuts can be prevented by using safer techniques (for example, not recapping needles by hand), disposing of used needles in appropriate sharps disposal containers, and using medical devices with safety features. Using appropriate barriers such as gloves, eye and face protection, or gowns when contact with blood is expected can prevent many exposures to the eyes, nose, mouth or skin.

**What is considered an exposure?**

Exposures occur through needle sticks or cuts from other sharp instruments contaminated with an infected patient's blood/body fluid or through contact of the eye, nose, mouth, or skin with a patient's blood/body fluid.

It is important to note that most exposures do not result in infection. However, timely follow-up is imperative to ensure that prophylactic medications, if indicated, are initiated as soon as possible.

**What should I do if I am exposed to the blood of a patient?**

1. Immediately following an exposure to blood:
  - a. Wash needle sticks and cuts with soap and water
  - b. Flush splashes to the nose, mouth, or skin with water
  - c. Irrigate eyes with clean water, saline or sterile irrigants
2. Report the exposure:
  - a. Follow your college's established reporting protocol
  - b. If the exposure occurs during business hours (Monday-Friday from 7am-6pm): Report immediately to the Student Health & Wellness Clinic located in the OU Physicians Building, Suite 2C
  - c. If the exposure occurs after hours or on a holiday: Report immediately to the Emergency Department for evaluation and then follow-up with the Student Health & Wellness Clinic the next business day

**What is the risk of infection following a bloodborne pathogen exposure?**

1. HBV: Healthcare personnel who have received the hepatitis B vaccination series and developed immunity to the virus are at virtually no risk for infection. For a susceptible person, the risk from a single needle stick can range from 6-30%. The SHWC strongly encourages all students with potential exposure to blood to complete

the hepatitis B vaccination series. If you are unsure of your vaccination status, please contact our office at (405) 271-2577.

2. **HCV:** The average risk for infection after a needle stick or cut exposure to HCV-infected blood is approximately 1.8%. The risk is less than 1.8% for splash exposures to the eyes, nose, mouth, or non-intact skin.
3. **HIV:** The average risk of HIV infection after a needle stick or cut exposure to HIV-infected blood is 0.3%. The risk is less than 0.3% for splash exposures to the eyes, nose, mouth, or non-intact skin.

**What treatment is available if an exposure occurs?**

1. **HBV:** If the student has proof of immunity to hepatitis B, no treatment is required. If immunity status is unknown, hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) alone or in combination with the vaccine is effective in preventing HBV infection following an exposure.
2. **HCV:** There is no vaccine against hepatitis C and no treatment after an exposure that will prevent infection. For these reasons, following recommended infection control practices to prevent percutaneous injuries is imperative.
3. **HIV:** There is no vaccine against HIV. However, studies have shown that the use of some antiretroviral drugs after an exposure may reduce the chance of HIV transmission. Treatment should be started as soon as possible, *preferably within hours* as opposed to days after the exposure. This is why the SHWC strongly encourages students to report any exposure *immediately*.

OUHSC students participating in clinical learning environments are encouraged to have coverage for needle stick injuries. Students who do not have needle stick coverage on their current health insurance plan may purchase this on a stand-alone basis. If you are enrolled in the OUHSC Student Health Insurance Plan through BCBS of Oklahoma (Basic or Enhanced Plan), this benefit is included and does not have to be purchased separately.

Questions regarding bloodborne pathogen exposures should be directed to the Student Health & Wellness Clinic at (405) 271-2577 or [studenthealthnurse@ouhsc.edu](mailto:studenthealthnurse@ouhsc.edu).

We look forward to providing you the health care services you may require while you are a student on this campus and wish you the very best as you pursue your educational studies at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City.

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