

FACT SHEET

Preventing and Controlling Spread of Infectious Diseases

The spread of infectious disease in the workplace can largely be prevented by following



recommended precautions, including frequent hand-washing, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and vaccination.

Universal Precautions

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Bloodborne Pathogens Standard (29 CFR 1910.1030) requires covered employees to observe universal precautions to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM). Hand hygiene (washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using a waterless, alcohol-based hand sanitizer) has long been considered one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Universal precautions also include:

- Flushing mucous membranes immediately after contact with blood or OPIM or following PPE removal
- Not eating, drinking, smoking, applying cosmetics or lip balm, or handling contact lenses in areas where there is a reasonable likelihood of occupational exposure to blood or OPIM
- Placing all needles and sharp objects in puncture-resistant, labeled, leak-proof containers
- Disposing any potentially contaminated waste in sealable bio-hazardous waste bags and containers

Standard Precautions

Standard precautions are based on the principle that all blood, body fluids, secretions and excretions (except sweat), non-intact skin and mucous membranes may contain transmissible infectious agents. Similar to universal precautions, standard precautions include hand and respiratory hygiene, gloves, gown, mask, eye protection, total face shield and/or safe injection practices. Surgical masks or respirators help reduce the spread of disease via airborne or droplet contamination. Respiratory hygiene also includes:

- Source control measures, e.g., covering mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and promptly disposing used tissues
- Spatial separation (ideally, greater than 3 feet)

Gloves should be worn whenever there is the likelihood of contact with blood, non-intact skin, mucous membranes or OPIM, and when handling or touching contaminated items or surfaces. Disposable gloves and mouthpieces should not be washed or decontaminated for reuse.

Other recommended practices include:

- Disinfecting surfaces such as countertops, phones and door handles
- Staying home from work when ill
- Vaccination to reduce the incidence of flu and other contagious diseases

Resources

1. CDC Office of Infectious Diseases: www.cdc.gov/oid/
2. Occupational Safety and Health Standards – Bloodborne Pathogens (use word search): <https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/>
3. WorkCare, Inc.: www.workcare.com