

Bloodborne Pathogens - Overview

Handout

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms present in human blood which can cause disease in humans, such as hepatitis B virus (HBV) and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Under the OSHA regulation, blood means human blood, blood products, or blood components. “Other potentially infectious materials” (OPIM) include human body fluids such as semen; vaginal secretions; cerebrospinal, synovial, pleural, pericardial, peritoneal, and amniotic fluids; saliva in dental procedures; any body fluids visibly contaminated with blood; unfixed human tissues or organs; and all body fluids in situations where it is difficult or impossible to differentiate between body fluids.

What is occupational exposure?

Occupational exposure means a “reasonably anticipated skin, eye, mucous membrane, or parenteral contact with blood or OPIM that may result from the performance of the employee’s duties.”

What must my employer do?

OSHA’s Bloodborne Pathogens Standard requires the employer to prepare a written exposure control program. Your employer will share the details of the written plan with you and tell you where you can get a copy.

If your job responsibilities provide the potential for exposure to bloodborne pathogens, your employer must provide training and information on:

- General explanations of the modes of transmission
- Symptoms, epidemiology, and warning signals related to general exposure
- Procedures to follow if exposure occurs

How to recognize tasks that may involve exposure

