

Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are actions that you take to place a barrier between yourself and potentially infected bodily fluids. Blood and other bodily fluids (e.g., semen, vaginal fluids, saliva, urine, feces and vomit) may contain viruses and bacteria that can be passed on to another person through direct contact. Hepatitis B and C, and HIV are diseases that can be transferred from one person to another through contact with infected blood and/or bodily fluids. Since there is no way to know without testing if a person has an infectious disease, it is recommended that you treat all bodily fluids as though they are infected.

How are blood and bodily fluids passed from one person to another?

Blood and bodily fluids are passed through:

- Open areas on the skin
- Splashing in the eye
- The mouth
- Unprotected sexual activity (oral, anal and vaginal)

- Injury with contaminated needles or other sharp objects
- Prenatally (mother to baby) and during delivery

How do I protect myself?

The easiest way to protect yourself from blood and bodily fluids is to have the injured person treat his/her own wound. If that is not possible, or assistance is needed, use latex gloves. If you do not have disposable gloves available, use a plastic bag (trash, shopping or sandwich) over your hands to create a barrier. If you are at work, your employer must provide appropriate personal protective equipment (gloves, goggles, disinfectant, etc.). Know where these items are located so that you will be better prepared to protect yourself.

How do I handle a bleeding injury?

- Have the injured child or adult hold an absorbent material to the wound; a clean disposable diaper offers good absorbency with the added protection of a plastic backing.

- You can also use paper towels, tissue or newspaper.
- Have the injured person apply pressure until the bleeding stops.
- Assist with placing a Band-Aid™ or bandage over the wound if needed.
- Dispose of bloody material in a plastic lined trash can or sealed plastic bag.
- Everyone should wash their hands with soap and running water as soon as possible. Disinfectant waterless hand cleaners or towelettes may be used if soap and running water are not available.

How do I clean surfaces that have blood and bodily fluids on them?

- Wear disposal gloves.
- Wash the area with soap and water, and thoroughly dry the area.
- Disinfect the surface with a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water, or use a hospital-strength disinfectant (e.g., Lysol, Cavicide or Non Acid Bathroom Cleaner (NABC)). Allow the area to remain wet for at least three minutes before drying. Consult the container label for differences in recommendations due to product strength.
- Use disposable cleaning materials if possible, such as paper towels, instead of cloth.
- Dispose of cleaning materials and gloves in a sealed plastic bag.



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- Wash hands with soap and running water. Again, disinfectant waterless hand cleaners or towelettes may be used if soap and running water are not available.

Please note: This fact sheet is for information purposes only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or your local health department.

If you have any questions about **Universal Precautions**, please contact FAFS' Information Line at 800.222.0047, or visit us online at www.fafsonline.org.

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4301 Route 1 South - Suite 100 - Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852
609.520.1500 / 609.520.1515 Fax - **FAFS Information Line: 800.222.0047**