



Bloodborne Pathogens

The term “bloodborne pathogens” brings fear to many who are routinely exposed to blood and bodily fluids as a part of their daily routines. Many of us feel relatively safe from bloodborne pathogens if we are not first responders, do not work in the medical field; or have not had sexual contact with a known AIDS carrier. The truth is, most of us can be exposed to bloodborne pathogens in many other situations.

Just what are bloodborne pathogens?

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms in the blood or other body fluids that can cause illness and disease in people. These microorganisms can be transmitted through contact with contaminated blood and body fluids. AIDS, or HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), is thought by most as the most common illness from bloodborne pathogens; however, Hepatitis B (HBV) is much more common. .

How are bloodborne pathogens transmitted?

Bloodborne pathogens are transmitted when contaminated blood or body fluids enter the body of another person. This can occur through a number of pathways, such as an accidental puncture by a sharp object contaminated with the pathogen. HIV or HBV may be encountered by people with the following occupations:

- Lab Research Personnel
- Health Care Workers
- Physicians
- Blood Bank Workers
- Campus Police Officers
- Fire & Rescue Personnel
- Janitors & Waste Handlers
- Craftsmen

Nonsubscriber employers may have any number of these occupations and we urge them to review the OSHA bloodborne pathogen standard. OSHA developed that standard in 1991, and this standard stipulates control measures against contamination, as well as the proper response when a person is exposed to blood or other bodily fluids from a person with a background that might make him/her a possible carrier of HIV or HBV.

The standard is extensive and can be referenced in the OSHA Regulation 1910.1030.