



# Loss Control Insights

## Bloodborne Pathogens and Safe Response

### Overview

If you are a health professional, a designated first responder, or first aid provider in your company, or if you are involved in maintenance or housekeeping work that could potentially expose you to bloodborne pathogens, you need to know how to protect yourself from bloodborne pathogens.

### What are bloodborne pathogens?

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms in human blood that can cause disease in humans. Examples are hepatitis B virus (HBV), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), malaria, syphilis, and brucellosis.

### Bloodborne pathogens and needlesticks

OSHA has revised its Bloodborne Pathogens standard to clarify the need for employers to select safer needle devices as they become available and to involve employees in identifying and choosing the devices. Employers have to establish a log to track needlestick injuries.

### Engineering and work practice controls

Your company strives to reduce the risk of infection to employees who, in order to perform their jobs, may be reasonably anticipated to come into contact with blood and other potentially infectious materials (OPIM). The risks can be reduced by following good work practices. Universal Precautions is an approach to infection control where all human blood and OPIM are treated as if they were known to be infectious for bloodborne pathogens.

Follow these precautions when working with human blood and OPIM:

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Dispose of sharps properly.
- Properly label and enclose any material contaminated with blood or OPIMs in leakproof red bags or containers.
- Wash your hands after handling contaminated material (even though you were wearing PPE).
- Report any exposure incident to your employer. An exposure incident is any specific eye, mouth, other mucous membrane, non-intact skin, or parenteral contact with blood or OPIM resulting from the performance of an employee's duties.

### Hepatitis B vaccination

Hepatitis B is the greatest bloodborne pathogen risk. Your employer offers you the hepatitis B vaccination series when your job duties could expose you to blood or OPIM. If you initially refuse the vaccination, you must sign a declination form, but you can request to be vaccinated later if you still have occupational exposure.