

Universal Health Precautions



The information has been adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion, National Center for Infectious Diseases.

Objectives:

- Understand and become familiar with universal precautions.
- Learn the importance of good hygiene and handwashing.
- Learn proper handwashing techniques.
- Learn the proper technique for applying and removing gloves.

Universal Precautions

As defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC): Universal Precautions (UP) are a set of practices designed to prevent the transmission of HIV, Hepatitis B and other blood borne pathogens (bacteria and viruses). Under UP, blood and other body fluids of all patients are considered potentially infectious.

Universal Precautions

- Handwashing.
- Wear protective items.
- Use and dispose of needles and sharps safely.
- Decontaminate equipment and devices.
- Promptly clean up blood and body fluid spills.
- Use safe disposal systems for waste collection and disposal.

Handwashing is the most important thing you can do to keep from getting sick:

When you wash your hands, you wash away bacteria and viruses that you have picked up from other people, dirty surfaces, and animals.



The information in this section has been adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Infectious Diseases. <http://www.cdc.gov/cleanhands/>

What is the correct way to wash my hands?

- Wet your hands with warm water.
- Apply soap.
- Rub hands together and scrub really well.
- Be sure to get under fingernails and in between fingers.
- Scrub for about 20 seconds - about as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice through to a friend !
- Rinse hands of soap.
- Dry hands well with a clean paper towel or cloth.
- Turn off faucet with paper towel.

What if I do not have access to a sink and soap?

Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- Apply product to the palm of one hand
- Rub hands together
- Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.

UP recommends the use of Personal Protective Equipment



- Gloves
- Aprons
- Gowns
- Protective eyewear
- Face shields
- Masks

When should I wear gloves?

- Anytime you may come in contact with blood or other body fluids such as urine, saliva, vomit, or the mucous membranes of the mouth or nose.
- When touching skin that may have sores, open wounds, cuts, or scratches.
- When handling any object that may have been soiled with blood or body fluids.
- When you have a cut or scratch on your hands.

If I wear gloves, do I still have to wash my hands?

YES!

- Wash hands before putting on gloves.
- Wash hands immediately after removing gloves.
- Gloves should be changed every time you are in contact with a new person.

Universal Precautions also include:

- Proper handling and disposal of needles.
- Taking precautions to prevent injury from scalpels, needles, and other sharp instruments.



Handling and Disposal of Sharps

- Use syringe or needle once only.
- Avoid recapping, bending, or breaking needles.
- Use puncture-proof container for disposal.
- Clearly label container—“SHARPS”.
- Never overfill or reuse sharps containers.

Summary:

- Universal Precautions recommend that you treat all bodily fluids as if they are infected with a blood-borne disease.
- Wash hands before putting on gloves *and* immediately after removing gloves.
 - Wet your hands with warm water; apply soap and scrub really well 20 seconds. Rinse and dry.
- Personal protective equipment includes gloves, face shields or eyewear, gowns, aprons and masks.
- Take extreme precautions to prevent injury from scalpels, needles, and other sharp instruments.