



## Health and Safety Notes California Childcare Health Program

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# Standard and Universal Precautions in the Child Care Setting

## What are standard and universal precautions?

**Universal precautions** is the term used for the guidelines that were developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the 1980s to reduce the spread of infection to health care providers and patients in health care settings.

**Standard precautions** is the new term used for an expansion of universal precautions, recognizing that any body fluid may hold contagious germs. They are still primarily designed to prevent the spread of bloodborne disease (disease carried by blood or other body fluids), but are also excellent measures to prevent the spread of infectious disease in group care settings such as child care facilities.

## Why are standard precautions needed?

Standard precautions are designed to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease from both recognized and unrecognized sources of infections. Germs that are spread through blood and body fluids can come at any time from any person. You may not know if someone is infected with a virus such as hepatitis B or HIV, and the infected person may not even know. This is why you must behave as if every individual might be infected with any germ in all situations that place you in contact with blood or body fluids.

## What do standard precautions consist of?

Standard precautions include the following:

### Hand washing

- after diapering or toileting children
- after handling body fluids of any kind
- before and after giving first aid (such as cleaning cuts and scratches or bloody noses)

- after cleaning up spills or objects contaminated with body fluids
- after taking off your disposable gloves
- remember that wearing gloves does not mean that you don't have to wash your hands!

### Wear non-permeable gloves

- during contact with blood or body fluids which contain blood (such as vomit or feces which contain blood you can see)
- when individuals have cuts, scratches or rashes which cause breaks in the skin of their hands

**Environmental disinfecting** should be done regularly and as needed. In the child care setting this means cleaning surfaces and objects that are soiled with blood or body fluids with soap and water, and then applying an EPA registered disinfectant according to label instructions. Wear gloves whenever handling blood.

**Proper disposal of materials** that are soaked in or caked with blood requires double bagging in plastic bags that are securely tied. Send these items home with the child, or if you wash them, wash them separately from other items. Items used for procedures on children with special needs (such as lancets for finger sticks, or syringes for injections given by parents) require a special container for safe disposal. Parents can provide what is called a "sharps container" which safely stores the lancets or needles until the parent can take them home for disposal.

## Standard precautions in child care settings vs. hospitals and clinics

Child care facilities follow the standard precautions in clinic and hospital settings with the following exceptions:

- Use of nonporous gloves is optional except when blood or blood-containing body fluids may be involved.
- Gowns and masks are not required.
- Appropriate barriers include materials such as disposable diaper table paper, disposable towels and surfaces that can be sanitized in group care settings.

## What else am I required to do?

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) also requires that all child care programs with staff (even family child care homes with assistants or volunteers) have an *Exposure Control Plan for Bloodborne Pathogens*. This plan must be in writing and include:

**Exposure determination.** This is a list of the job titles or duties which might put an individual in contact with blood or blood-containing fluids (such as first aid, nose blowing, diapering, etc.)

**Methods of compliance.** These are the ways you will assure your plan will work and which include written standard precautions and cleaning plans, training of staff in their use, and the availability of gloves.

**Hepatitis B vaccination.** This must be offered by the employer at no cost to staff. The vaccine series can begin either

- within 10 days of employment, or
- within 24 hours after a potential blood exposure (accidental contact with blood while administering first aid, diapering an infant with a bloody stool, etc.)

**Note: Hepatitis B is a series of three shots which must be given on a specific schedule. Now that all children are required to have the series before entering care, child care providers should be at a reduced risk of getting hepatitis B in a child care setting.**

**Exposure reporting procedures.** These are required and will tell staff what to do if something happens which puts an employee in contact with blood on their broken skin (cuts, scratches, open rashes or

chapped skin) or on their mucous membranes (in the eye, mouth or nose). There are also record-keeping requirements to document the exposure situation, whether or not the employee received a free medical exam and follow-up, and that the employee was offered the hepatitis B vaccination if she/he did not already have the series.

**Training on OSHA regulations.** This must be provided to all staff at the time that they start work and must include:

- an explanation of how HIV (which causes AIDS) and HBV (which causes hepatitis B) are transmitted
- an explanation of standard precautions and the exposure control plan for your program.

For more information on OSHA requirements, contact the Cal/OSHA Consultation Service office

## References

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs*, 4th ed. Pediatrics; 2019.

Child Care Law Center. (1994). *CalOSHA Regulations on Bloodborne Pathogens*. San Francisco, CA.

Donowitz, L.G. (1999). *Infection control in the child care center and preschool*. Fourth edition. Pennsylvania: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins.