

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

### Background

The Division believes that it is important to develop within staff and students an understanding and acceptance of universal precautionary measures related to the spread of communicable diseases. Further, the Division believes that it, together with the Regional Health Authority, has responsibility for providing appropriate education. The Division also believes that staff and students who contract serious communicable diseases (HIV, AIDS, Hepatitis B, etc.) are to be treated with dignity and compassion. Confidentiality is of utmost importance.

### Definitions

1. Communicable diseases are diseases which can be spread to others. There are three types - parasites, viral and bacterial. Communicable diseases can be spread in different ways depending on the particular disease (direct contact, airborne, water/food, blood, body fluids).
2. The school public health nurse must be notified by the attending physician, or school personnel when necessary, whenever a "Reportable Communicable Disease" is identified in the school. A full list of these diseases is contained in the Health Resource Binder. Some common ones are:

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) | Botulism              |
| Congenital Infections: (herpes, rubella)  | Chicken Pox           |
| Food-borne Illness                        | Hepatitis A, B, C     |
| Meningococcal Infections                  | Measles               |
| Meningitis                                | Mumps                 |
| Poliomyelitis                             | Rabies                |
| Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever              | Salmonella Infections |
| Tetanus                                   | Toxic Shock Syndrome  |
| Tuberculosis                              | Typhoid               |
| Waterborne Illness                        | Yellow Fever          |

3. Using universal precautions simply means that blood and certain body fluids are handled as if they were infectious. This minimizes potential exposure and further spread.

### Guidelines

1. The medical officer of health, and other health professionals, have responsibility for identifying a situation as one of risk.
2. When school personnel suspect a student has a communicable disease, they are encouraged to contact the parents/guardians (if applicable), who are encouraged to seek medical advice.

3. Principals are encouraged to invite the school public health nurse services to in-service staff and students regarding the universal precautionary methods used when cleaning spills of blood and other body fluids.
4. In the event that a student or staff member suffering from a communicable disease is removed from the school or workplace by the school public health nurse or other health professionals, they shall be readmitted to school or work after medical clearance has been received from a physician or the school public health nurse.
5. It is imperative that each staff member accepts responsibility for his or her personal health and safety. Staff are encouraged to keep their immunizations current.

## **Procedures – Universal Precautions**

### **1. Hand Washing**

Hand washing is the single most effective means of reducing the spread of disease. Hands and any skin surface contaminated with blood or other body fluids should be washed thoroughly as soon as possible after the exposure.

- a. To wash hands, use plain soap and vigorously rub together all surfaces of lathered hands for at least ten seconds. Rinse thoroughly under a stream of warm water. Avoid the use of abrasive soaps and brushes. Hand lotions should be used to prevent drying of the skin.
- b. In the case of a needle stick injury, or a human bite which pierces the skin, notify your employer (if it happens on the job) and the local community health office for appropriate follow up.

### **2. Use of Protective Clothing and Equipment**

- a. Use disposable gloves when:
  - i. touching open sores,
  - ii. caring for a person who is bleeding,
  - iii. examining mucous membranes (inside of the mouth),
  - iv. handling or cleaning up blood or other body fluids,
  - v. handling linens saturated with blood or body fluids.
- a. Disposable gloves are not to be reused, and must be changed between individuals or procedures.
- b. Household “rubber” gloves may be used, but require cleaning with a 1:10 bleach solution or an approved disinfectant before they can be used again. They must also be checked before use for any holes.
- c. Use waterproof coverings on any cuts or sores.
- d. See “Disposal of Contaminated Wastes” for acceptable glove disposal method.
- e. Hands must be washed after gloves are removed.
- f. Use gowns, aprons and/or protective eye gear if splashing of blood or body fluids may occur.

- g. If a face splash occurs, wash face as soon as possible. If splash involved the eyes, nose or mouth, rinse well with running water.

### **3. Cleaning of Blood/Body Fluids**

- a. Use gloves.
- b. Use disposable material whenever possible to absorb large spills.
- c. Disinfect surfaces first by covering spills with paper towels; pour on a 1:10 bleach solution and let sit a minimum of 10 minutes. Then clean up spill and wash with detergent. Air dry.
- d. Use disposable cleaning cloths if possible (see disposal of contaminated wastes). Otherwise, soak cleaning cloths and mops in a 1:10 bleach solution, rinse and let air dry. (Some surfaces may be damaged by bleach).
- e. Isopropyl alcohol or other chemical germicides approved for use as "hospital disinfectants" will kill viruses when used as directed.

### **4. Laundering of Clothing and Linen Soiled with Blood/Body Fluids**

- a. Use disposable gloves when handling heavily soiled linen.
- b. If responsible for washing linens:
  - i. rinse in cold water prior to washing
  - ii. uses household bleach if fabric permits
  - iii. wash in water as hot as the material will allow
  - iv. dry on as hot a setting as the material will allow
  - v. if heavy soilage, consider laundering separately

### **5. Disposal of Contaminated Wastes**

- a. Wear disposable gloves when handling waste contaminated with blood and body fluids.
- b. Garbage cans should be lined with plastic bags.
- c. Put wastes in sturdy plastic bags before discarding with the regular garbage.
- d. Avoid picking up sharp objects (broken glass, syringes and needles) by hand. Use a broom and dust pan.
- e. Sharp objects which may be contaminated with blood or body fluids should be put in a puncture resistant, plastic or metal container with a firm-fitting lid (i.e. empty coffee can). Sharps containers may also be purchased at pharmacies or medical supply stores.

### **6. First Aid Precautions**

- a. Minimize direct contact with blood or other body fluids by using a dressing or clean cloth as a barrier.
- b. When possible, have the person clean and dress their own wounds, or help you do so.

- c. Wear disposable gloves when there is bleeding or if you have cuts/sores on your hands.
- d. Wash your hands thoroughly after removing gloves or after coming in contact with any body fluid.
- e. Use a mouth piece if possible when doing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. If a mouth piece is not available, clean off the person's mouth with a clean cloth or tissue and proceed.

## 7. Transmission

- a. Casual, non-intimate contact with an infected person will not normally result in the transmission of an infection.
- b. For any infection to occur;
  - i. you need to be exposed to infected blood or body fluids, AND
  - ii. there needs to be a way for the virus to get into a person's blood system (through cuts, scrapes, sores, skin conditions such as eczema, splashes into the mouth, nose or eyes, or needle sticks/cuts by sharp objects contaminated with the virus).

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### References

Section 3,7,11,33,52,53,196,197,222 Education Act  
Public Health Act