

Blood-Borne Pathogens Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the transmission of blood-borne pathogens is controlled, such that the personal and social impact of infection is minimised. It is also the purpose of this policy to encourage staff and students to modify "at risk" behaviours.

Section 2 - Definitions

(2) For the purpose of this policy:

- a. blood-borne pathogens - include the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis viruses, their associated mutations and other blood-borne viruses.
- b. Standard precautions - are standard operating procedures that apply to contact with all human blood, body fluids and tissues regardless of their perceived infectious risk. These precautions include aseptic techniques, hand washing, use of personal protective equipment, appropriate disinfection of equipment and implementation of environmental controls. Standard precautions will incorporate safe systems of handling blood (including dried blood), other body fluids, secretions and excretions (excluding sweat), non-intact skin and mucous membranes, and human tissues.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(3) Southern Cross University is concerned about the health and wellbeing of staff, students and visitors and aims to ensure all precautions are in place to prevent the transmission of blood-borne pathogens. The prevention of transmission of blood-borne pathogens is supported through educating staff and students, and assisting those who may be infected with these pathogens.

Section 4 - Procedures

(4) Southern Cross University will raise the awareness of blood-borne diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C among the University community. The awareness will be to a level where the entire community is aware of the facts about transmission, and individuals are able to assess their own risk and make decisions that will protect them from transmission.

(5) Southern Cross University will endeavour to ensure that myths, prejudices and unnecessary fears are reduced, and participants in education programs will emerge with the requisite practical skills necessary for the prevention of transmission of blood-borne diseases.

(6) Education will be directed to all staff and students. Education programs for blood-borne diseases will be multifaceted, and will occur in a wide variety of settings throughout the University. Particular emphasis is placed on the provision of education upon request, for campus support groups, professional caregivers and people who are HIV or Hepatitis positive.

(7) Hepatitis B vaccination is available through the Student Support Centre Medical Officer to all staff members who, in the course of their work, are at increased risk of contracting Hepatitis B due to contact with human body fluids or due to risk of contact with used injecting equipment and other contaminated sharps. Post-vaccination testing should be carried out to determine the level of protection conferred by the vaccine. Non-responders (those people who have not developed protective antibody levels following vaccination) will not have immunity, and should be counselled regarding their options.

(8) All persons using sharps in laboratories, research situations and for personal/medical use are responsible for their safe disposal in standard sharps bins that have been provided. Sharps containers are available in all laboratories and have also been installed in various toilets and buildings around the University to encourage proper disposal of used injecting equipment.

(9) Training is provided for Grounds staff in the proper handling and disposal of used injection equipment.

(10) Stringent confidentiality procedures are enforced within the University in respect of all personal information concerning infectious disease.

(11) The University maintains insurance policies consistent with current knowledge and practice relating to HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis. This ensures appropriate cover in the event of University employees contracting HIV or Hepatitis from work-related duties, students contracting these diseases as a result of the professional experience component of a course, and students contracting these diseases as a consequence of participation in laboratory exercises or research activities.

(12) In NSW it is illegal to discriminate against another person on the grounds that they have contracted a disease such as HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis. The University requires all members of its community to meticulously avoid any such discrimination. Further information about this may be obtained from the Equity and Diversity Office.

(13) Where an individual believes they have been treated unfairly or inappropriately pursuant to the implementation or operation of this policy, that person shall have the right to seek resolution of their grievance through the Equity and Diversity Office.

(14) Any educational activity that requires students to deal with human body fluids should have prior approval from the University's Human Research Ethics Committee.

(15) All body fluids and tissues should be handled as if they are infectious. Whenever possible students should use their own blood or body fluids during laboratory classes. However, if outside sources of human blood or tissue are required they should be screened for the presence of infectious diseases prior to use in class.

(16) All staff and students must wash their hands before wearing and after removing gloves. This is to ensure that viruses that are able to penetrate gloves due to their size do not further contaminate the user.

(17) All participants in laboratories that deal with human body fluids and sharps must wear enclosed footwear, gloves, eye protection and lab coats.

(18) Persons (not necessarily in a laboratory) who come into contact with body fluids in the course of their work must wear the personal protective equipment described above.

(19) Sharps should be disposed of by the person who used them, immediately after use into a container at the site of use. Sharps should not be carried from an area of use to a different area for disposal.

(20) To prevent cross-infection, all disposable equipment supplied is for single use only.

(21) Any waste materials contaminated with body fluids or tissues should be disposed of in a contaminated waste container.

(22) Each laboratory must display and provide printed guidelines on Biohazard Safety.

(23) In the event that human body fluids come in contact with someone's mucous membranes or a break in the skin, the affected area should be rinsed immediately. The affected person should immediately attend their medical officer for appropriate testing and monitoring. An [Incident, Accident and Hazard Report](#) must be completed.

(24) In the event of suffering a needle-stick injury, the affected person should immediately squeeze the wound to express blood as this may wash out viral particles. The person should then clean the site of injury with disinfectant and cover the site, report the incident to the [First Aid Officer](#), and complete an [Incident, Accident and Hazard Report](#).

(25) The person who has received the needle-stick injury or whose mucous membranes have had contact with body fluids should attend a doctor's surgery to have a blood test, which will confirm their antibody status at the time of the injury. Due to the long incubation periods of these viruses, the affected person should have a follow-up blood test after the recommended time period to determine if they have contracted a disease.

(26) If the source of the used needle/sharp is known, that person can be approached for an antibody test to confirm whether or not they are infected with a transmissible disease.

(27) Counselling will be provided to meet the needs of staff and students both pre-testing and post-testing, especially when a positive result is likely or is returned. The University will make known the location of Department of Health and other centres providing testing and counselling by professionally trained counsellors and others who work with infected individuals.

(28) The basic principles of spills management are:

- a. Standard precautions apply where there is a risk of contact with blood or body substances;
- b. Spills should be cleaned up before the area is disinfected; and
- c. Aerosolation of spilled material should be avoided.

(29) Management of blood or body substance spills:

- a. Spot Cleaning - Wear disposable cleaning gloves and wipe up spot immediately with a damp cloth, tissue or paper towel. Discard contaminated materials to contaminated waste bin. Wash hands.
- b. Small Spills (up to 10 cm diameter) - Wear disposable cleaning gloves. Eyewear and plastic apron should be worn where there is a risk of splashing occurring. Wipe up spill immediately with absorbent material e.g. paper hand towelling. Place contaminated absorbent material into contaminated waste bin. Clean the area with warm water and detergent, using disposable cleaning cloth or sponge. Where contact with bare skin is likely disinfect area by wiping with suitable disinfectant and allow to dry. Discard contaminated materials to contaminated waste bin. Wash hands.
- c. Large Spills (greater than 10 cm diameter) - Contact Facilities for cleaning materials and equipment. Wear disposable gloves, eyewear, mask and plastic apron. Cover area of the spill with granular disinfectant and leave for time specified on formulation and labelling instructions. Use "Infectious Waste Clean-up Kit" placing all contaminated items into impervious container or plastic bag for disposal. Wipe area with absorbent material to remove any residue and place in contaminated waste bin. Discard contaminated materials (Infectious Waste Clean-up Kit) to contaminated waste bin. Clean the area with warm water and detergent, using disposable cleaning cloth or sponge. Where contact with bare skin is likely disinfect area by wiping with suitable disinfectant and allow to dry. Discard contaminated materials to contaminated waste bin. Wash hands.

(30) Staff or post-graduate students who plan to collect human blood for the purpose of research, must complete an accredited course in blood collection. Blood collection devices that minimise risk of contact with blood must be used at all times. Standard precautions must be followed wherever there is a risk of contact with human blood or body fluids.

Status and Details

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