

University of Arkansas - Pulaski Technical College
Dental Assisting Program
Policies and Guidelines
For Addressing
Bloodborne Infectious Diseases

Adopted 2000 – Reviewed 2021

Policy and Guidelines

In order to reduce the possibility of exposure to Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), students, faculty, staff and patients, University of Arkansas - Pulaski Technical College Dental Assisting Program has adopted a policy regarding vaccinations for HBV, education of HIV and the use of universal precautions.

Introduction and Background

The management of issues related to infectious diseases in the Dental Assisting program is a primary concern to the dental assisting faculty. The rapid increase of blood borne diseases has caused an awareness of the need for policies and guidelines. This policy recognizes the need for balanced protection from risk for students, faculty, staff and patients with individual right of privacy and equal opportunity. A major area of attention in development is the national epidemic of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). AIDS is a disease in which HIV destroys the immune system allowing opportunistic organisms to infect the body with fatal consequences. There is no immunization for AIDS at this time, but the chance of transmission can be greatly reduced by education, careful practice and utilizing universal precautions.

Hepatitis B virus – Vaccination

The other known blood borne disease with serious implications for health care workers is Hepatitis B Virus infection, which kills about 200 health care workers and infects thousands more each year. Although much more infectious than HIV (risk is 7 to 30 percent following a percutaneous exposure to a hepatitis surface antigen carrier) it is less fatal than HIV, and is completely preventable by immunization. Given these circumstances, University of Arkansas - Pulaski Technical College faculty recommends that:

- A. Students are highly encouraged to complete HBV immunization prior to their first clinical rotations. Students sign documentation as to whether they have taken the vaccine or that they have been informed of the importance and decline the vaccine. OSHA recommends a titer 1-2 months after the vaccination series is complete.
- B. Faculty members who might be exposed to blood in the clinical supervision of students must have received the HB Vaccine, have a titer showing that they are protected against HBV, or if medically at risk for the vaccine, sign a declination form indicating refusal to accept the offered vaccination as per the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's December 1991, safety standard for health care exposure to blood borne pathogens.

- C. Universal/standard precautions should be practiced by students and faculty in the teaching process when there is the possibility of exposure to body fluids (saliva, blood, respiratory secretions, stool, urine) during the teaching or practice involved in day to day teaching both in the classroom and clinical facilities.

If a student or faculty member feels there has been exposure, they should contact their supervisor for counseling and follow-up care.

Guidelines on Testing

An instructor or student who believes him/herself to be at risk has an ethical responsibility to know his or her HIV status. Practitioners who perform “exposure prone” procedures should know their HIV status.

- A. Students or staff who believe they may be at risk for HIV antibody, have the obligations to be tested. While the testing decisions should be voluntary for the individual, there may be instances in which testing could be required. Education, training, and confidentiality safeguards can be used to encourage those who believe they might be at risk to be tested.
- B. For students, faculty or staff, testing and pre and post testing counseling will be available either within the institution or at a nearby clinical site, and will be confidential.
- C. Testing records will be kept separately from academic or employment files and will be accessible only on a need-to-know basis with the individual’s written consent.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus – Education and Management

Students will receive printed and oral informational instruction on universal/standard precautions for blood and body fluid infections in accordance with CDC guidelines prior to any exposure to patients.

HIV Positive – Students, Faculty and Staff

- A. Students who are HIV positive or have AIDS may not pose a health risk to other students in an academic setting, but in a clinical setting the CDC guidelines and universal precautions will be followed.

- B. Students, faculty and staff who know they are infected should voluntarily inform a designated official in the school who will provide information and referral on health care and counseling, then begin a process to assess the need for necessary modification and/or accommodations in clinical education or job functions. Such modifications will be rated on a case by case basis by a group designated for that purpose.

HIV – Post Exposure and Procedures

(OSHA rules followed for employees)

- A. Immediate antiseptic procedures should be followed after possible exposure.
- B. A student or faculty member has an ethical duty to report to the faculty member in charge or designated school official of an accident that exposed him/her, or a patient to a risk of transmission of a blood borne diseases.
- C. Following exposure, confidential testing and appropriate counseling should be sought with the student's primary care physician. The student or faculty member is ethically obliged to be tested for HIV when the patient is exposed to a provider's blood. Although it is more of a matter for the clinical site than the school, if such a provider tests positive, the patient should be notified of the results notwithstanding the provider's privacy rights and the patient should be offered HIV testing, counseling and prophylaxis as appropriate.
- D. If accidental exposure occurs, faculty, student, and staff should follow the CDC guidelines for occupational exposure: if needle stick test for HIV, establish seronegativity first, then retest, at the student's expense, at 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months, and one year.

A Significant Occupation Exposure is Defined As:

- A. A needle stick or cut caused by a needle or sharp instrument that was actually or potentially contaminated with blood or body fluids.
- B. A mucous membrane (i.e., splash to eye or mouth) exposure to blood or body fluids.
- C. A cutaneous exposure involving large amounts of blood or prolonged contact with blood, especially when the exposed skin is chapped, abraded or afflicted with dermatitis.

Guidelines for Protection Against Blood Borne Diseases

Students entering a health occupations program must be aware that they are entering a profession that increases their risk to exposure for blood borne diseases such as Hepatitis B and Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV) or AIDS.

Hepatitis B and AIDS can be transmitted through needle sticks, contact with an open wound, non-intact skin (i.e., chapped, abraded, or weeping dermatitis) or mucous membrane to blood, blood contaminated body fluids, or concentrated virus.

Students will be taught principles of infection control and specific risk control recommendations to reduce the risk of becoming exposed to blood borne diseases.

University of Arkansas - Pulaski Technical College does advocate the following guidelines for students and faculty protection against Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and other infectious agents:

- A. All student and faculty are to wear gloves when handling body fluids (blood, body secretions, etc.).
- B. All students and faculty are to use a disposable surgical mask when involved with patient care.
- C. All Students and faculty are to wear goggles or safety glasses when there is potential for splatter of blood, bloody secretions or body fluids. It is the responsibility of the students and faculty to purchase goggles or safety glasses when they are not available in the clinical area.
- D. It is recommended that all students and faculty are to use specially designed masks to administer CPR.
- E. All students and faculty are to cover all self-limited abrasions and lacerations with bioclusive dressings.
- F. All students and faculty should wear long sleeve lab jackets, gowns or aprons during procedures that are likely to generate splashes of blood or other body fluids.
- G. All students and faculty are to avoid recapping needles.

If Exposure to a Blood Borne Disease Occurs

- A. If source of exposure is known (i.e., patient you are caring for), check the patients chart for lab data that may verify source status (HBV and /or HIV positive or HBV and /or HIV negative).

- B. If source is NEGATIVE, no further action is needed.
- C. If source is POSITIVE, or if source is unknown, or if no lab data is available the following options are available:
 - 1. Contact your local County Health Unit for an appointment with the Public Health Investigator. The investigator will give you guidance and recommendations for HIV follow-up. The cost is minimal. The Health Unit does not offer Hepatitis B follow-up.
 - 2. Contact your personal physician for Hepatitis B and/or HIV follow up. The Center of Disease Control recommends for Hepatitis B exposure the following:
 - a. If an exposed person has not had the Hepatitis B vaccine previously, the person should receive a single dose of Hepatitis B immune globulin, if this can be given within seven days of exposure. The person should also receive the vaccine series.
 - b. If the exposed person had been previously vaccinated, the person should be tested for antibodies to Hepatitis B surface antigen. If antibody levels are inadequate, one dose of vaccine and one dose of Hepatitis B immune globulin should be given.
 - c. File an incident report with a dental assisting faculty member at Pulaski Technical College and inform the doctor at the clinical site where the exposure occurred.

Hepatitis Policy

The Dental Assisting Program at University of Arkansas - Pulaski Technical College strongly urges each student accepted into the Dental Assisting Program to obtain a Hepatitis B vaccination. The following information states why the institution officials feel that each student involved in patient care should receive the vaccine.

What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis is an infections or inflammation of the liver. Different viruses cause hepatitis but produce similar symptoms. The Hepatitis B virus (HBV) causes Hepatitis B. HBV results in liver damage that can range from mild to severe to fatal. Six to ten percent of infected individuals will become carriers of HBV. Carriers can develop chronic liver diseases, primary liver cancer and they are infectious to others.

How Wide Spread is Hepatitis B?

The Centers of Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 800,000 – 1.4 million people in the United States have chronic HBV infection with 620,000 dying worldwide from HBV related liver disease each year. Furthermore, the CDC estimates that 12,000 health care workers will become infected each year. Of these 12,000, 500 to 600 are hospitalized each year and 200 to 300 die of diseases associated with HBV.

How Can You Contract Hepatitis?

HBV can be transmitted by needle stick, by coming in contact with open wounds, non-intact skin, or mucous membranes with infected blood or body fluids containing infected blood. Additionally, saliva from an infected person can transmit HBV. Blood is the single most important source of HBV.

How Can You Protect Yourself?

Since all health care providers run the risk of exposure to a patient's blood, health care providers are at risk of contracting Hepatitis B. Some activities where exposure can occur include blood control and dental procedures. The best preventive method is the use of universal precautions. Treat every patient as if they could be a carrier for Hepatitis B or any other blood born diseases. Use gloves to avoid contact with blood or blood contaminated body fluids. Another preventive action is to receive the Hepatitis B vaccine.

About the Vaccine

The cost of the vaccinations usually ranges between \$300.00 to \$375.00. University of Arkansas - Pulaski Technical College has an agreement with The Shot Clinic to give the vaccination at a reduced cost. PTC is always striving to find the most cost saving opportunity for vaccinations. If a student is under the age of 19 they are eligible for the vaccination at the AR Health Department for a considerably reduced rate. If the series is started at the age of 18 they will finish the series even if the student turns 19 in the middle of the series.

Students should also be aware that vaccination is not guaranteed to prevent them from contracting Hepatitis B. However, the vaccine does afford a high degree of protection (90 – 95%) in health persons against Hepatitis B virus. Effectiveness will be established after the vaccine has been given, and exposure to the virus. The vaccine does not offer protection against other forms of the Hepatitis virus, such as Hepatitis A, Hepatitis C, Hepatitis F, or Hepatitis G.

The adverse reactions reported after receiving the Hepatitis B vaccine, include soreness, swelling, warmth at the injection site, chills, fever, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain/cramping and diarrhea.