

# Routine Practices Fact Sheet

Routine practices, formerly known as universal precautions, are a set of strategies that are used to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious disease. Body fluids from an infectious person, such as blood, vomit, stool, urine, vaginal fluid, semen and respiratory secretions can spread illness. A person who does not look sick can still spread illness - that is why it is important to always protect ourselves. Use routine practices to protect yourself and others, by following these guidelines:

**1. Hand Hygiene** – Cleaning your hands is the most effective way of preventing the spread of infections.

- ✓ It is recommended to wash with soap and water when hands are visibly dirty, otherwise the use of an alcohol based hand sanitizer (60% and up) is the preferred method for cleaning your hands.
- ✓ Hand hygiene is required after touching blood, body fluids, and secretions / excretions whether or not gloves are worn. Hand hygiene must be performed immediately after gloves are removed.
- ✓ It may be necessary to wash hands between procedures on the same person to prevent cross contamination of different body sites.

**2. Gloves** – Gloves must be used properly to prevent illness from spreading.

- ✓ Gloves must be removed and thrown away immediately after the task is finished.
- ✓ Put on clean gloves just before touching any mucous membranes or non-intact skin.
- ✓ Change gloves between procedures on the same individual to prevent cross contamination.
- ✓ Remember to wash your hands right away.

When to wear gloves:

- When providing care where your hands are likely to contact body fluids
- When diapering or assisting with toileting
- When handling soiled laundry. Bag the laundry in the room
- When cleaning surfaces that have visible soil from body fluids such as blood or diarrhea

When NOT to wear gloves:

- When assisting someone to eat or drink or take medications, as long as they are not actively coughing or sneezing
- When holding someone, or touching their intact skin as long as there is no visible blood or unexplained rash
- When cleaning surfaces that have no visible soil

**3. Mask, Eye Protection, Face Shield and Gowns** – BEFORE any health care activity, assess the risk of exposure to body fluids or contaminated surfaces. Make this routine!

- ✓ Wear a surgical or procedure mask and eye protection (face shield, goggles) to protect the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth during activities that are likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions.

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- ✓ Wear a gown with long sleeves when it is likely your clothing could be splashed with body fluids, such as when performing personal care when someone is coughing or sneezing or one who has diarrhea and/or vomiting. The cuffs of the gloves should go over the cuffs of the gown. Remove the soiled gown as soon as possible and perform hand hygiene.

#### **4. Handling Sharps** – Handle all sharps as minimally as possible.

- ✓ Do not re-cap needles.
- ✓ Place used needles and other sharps in a puncture resistant sharps container.
- ✓ If you find a sharp never pick it up with your bare hands. If you have the equipment to safely pick it up (tongs and puncture resistant gloves, puncture resistant container) then you can do so. If not, block off the area where the sharp is located and contact someone.
- ✓ If you are exposed to blood or body fluids by a needle stick injury, an opening in the skin or by a human bite, immediately report it to occupational health or your manager.

#### **5. Environmental Cleaning** – It is important that cleaning be performed on a routine and consistent basis. Cleaning and disinfection methods must be reviewed to make sure they are adequately disinfecting contaminated surfaces.

To clean up after a blood or body spill, follow these steps:

- Put on a pair of household rubber gloves
- Clean up the spill using paper towels, then wash the area with detergent and water
- Dispose of used paper towels in the garbage bin. If there is a large amount of blood or body fluids, towels should be discarded in a biohazard bag
- Disinfect the entire spill area with a hospital grade disinfectant and allow it to stand for the amount of time recommended by the manufacturer
- Wipe up the area again using disposable towels and discard in regular waste
- Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene
- ✓ Ensure that reusable equipment is not used for the care of another person until it has been properly cleaned and disinfected. Cleaning is always to be done before disinfection or sterilization.
- ✓ Follow manufacturer's directions to make sure the cleaning product you are using is effective.

#### **Other Questions?**

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 x349. Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | [www.hpepublichealth.ca](http://www.hpepublichealth.ca)

#### **Sources:**

- Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (2011). Routine Practices and Additional Precautions in All Health Care Settings. Public Health Ontario
- Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (2012). Best Practices for Environmental Cleaning for Prevention and Control of Infections in All Health Care Settings. Public Health Ontario

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