



# UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

## WHAT ARE UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS?

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Universal precautions are a set of protective measures one can take to prevent transmission of communicable diseases.<sup>i</sup> Universal precautions entail avoiding contact with an individual's blood or bodily fluids under any circumstance. Using universal precautions in any circumstance that involves blood or bodily fluids recognizes that all people are potential carriers of a number of diseases and germs and creates a routine safety provision. All organizations should have clear policies and procedures on using universal precautions and ensure that the training and resources to follow those guidelines are available and current.

## WHAT IS A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE?

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A communicable disease is a disease that is spread from one person to another via airborne viruses or bacteria or through the exchange of blood or another bodily fluid.<sup>ii</sup> Communicable diseases include HIV, Hepatitis, and Influenza.

## HOW CAN WE USE UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS? <sup>iii</sup>

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- Wear protective gloves or other protective barriers when in contact with blood or other bodily fluid.
- Immediately and thoroughly wash hands and other exposed surfaces if you are exposed to blood or other bodily fluids.
- Clean any area exposed to blood or other bodily fluids with a mild bleach solution (1:10).
- Change and discard gloves after every use.
- Dispose of potentially infectious or soiled waste in accordance to state and local regulations.
- Wash soiled laundry in hot water and dry on high.
- Cover all open wounds on your body.
- Sterilize any personal care products that may be exposed to blood or other bodily fluids.
- Have a puncture-resistant disposal container available for sharp objects (including razors) that need to be discarded.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, using a personal towel or disposable paper towels to dry your hands.



### WHICH FLUIDS TRANSMIT HIV? <sup>1</sup>

- Blood
- Vaginal Secretions
- Semen & Pre-Seminal Fluid
- Breast Milk
- Any bodily fluid that is visibly contaminated with blood

### WHICH DO NOT\*? <sup>1</sup>

- Feces
- Saliva or Nasal Secretions
- Tears
- Sweat
- Sputum (mixture of saliva and mucus coughed up)
- Urine
- Vomit

\*unless they contain visible blood

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

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- Visit the *Positively Safe Toolkit* for more information on **Risk Reduction** and how to start a conversation on HIV/AIDS with the **HIV/AIDS Conversation Guide**.

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<sup>1</sup> Universal Precautions for Prevention of Transmission of HIV: Fact Sheet, CDC 1996

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.globalhealth.gov/global-health-topics/communicable-diseases/>

<sup>3</sup> Perspectives in Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Update: Universal Precautions for Prevention of Transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Hepatitis B Virus, and Other Bloodborne Pathogens in Health-Care Settings, CDC 1988