



INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREVENTION

Preventing the spread of infectious disease is an important part of keeping workers safe and healthy while at work and when they return home to their families. Infectious diseases are caused by microorganism such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites.

How Do Diseases Spread?

How a disease spreads can vary. Many diseases, such as AIDS and Hepatitis, can be transmitted from saliva-to-blood, or from blood-to-blood contact, while other diseases like influenza can be transmitted by airborne germs.

Diseases are primarily spread through:

- the air as small droplets (i.e. sneezing) or tiny aerosolized particles;
- contact with feces and then with the mouth;
- contact with skin or mucus membranes (a thin moist lining on many parts of the body such as the mouth, nose, eyes and genitals);
- contact with blood or other bodily fluids (i.e. urine, saliva etc.)

Often, disease can be spread not only through direct, person to person contact but also indirectly from an infected person to something in the environment (i.e. door handles, newspapers/magazines, toilets etc.)

There are many ways to contract an infectious disease and someone who has such a disease may not even know it.

Universal Precautions

Remember - many infectious diseases are invisible and easily contracted. Whenever there is the potential for coming in contact with an injured person's bodily fluids (i.e. administering first aid), you must also protect yourself.

The following universal precautions can help prevent the spread of and reduce the likelihood of contracting an infectious disease:

- Wash hands frequently (particularly before consuming food, after using the washroom etc.);
- Get the appropriate vaccines for potential exposures (i.e. flu shot, hepatitis vaccination.);
- Stay at home if you are sick so you do not spread the illness to others;
- Turn away and use a tissue, or cough and sneeze into your arm, not your hand. Dispose of tissues immediately;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs can transfer from your hands into your body through mucus membranes;
- Use the personal protective equipment as necessary (i.e. rubber or latex gloves, face masks, shields or protective eye wear when administering first aid);
- Clean commonly used surfaces regularly (i.e. lunchroom tables, toilets, microwave handles, telephones); and
- Ensure that shared PPE is properly cleaned and disinfected as per the manufacturer specifications/regulatory requirements (respirators, faceshields etc.).

Discussion

Engage workers in a discussion regarding:

- The organization's Infectious Disease Control Program; and
- Additional actions that might be taken at the workplace..