

APPENDIX B

**EMPLOYEE
INFORMATION SHEET
ON BLOODBORNE
PATHOGENS**



Employee Information Sheet on Bloodborne Pathogens

A pathogen is any microorganism that can cause disease in humans. “Bloodborne” means that the pathogens are present in human blood. Bloodborne pathogens include the Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Other diseases (such as Hepatitis C, syphilis, and malaria) can also be spread by exposure to infected blood, but HBV and HIV are the most significant. People today tend to focus on AIDS and the HIV virus, but Hepatitis B is really a more significant problem. Hepatitis B is just as deadly as AIDS and is much easier to catch. There is also a vaccine available that can prevent Hepatitis B, whereas no vaccine is available against AIDS.

Hepatitis B

“Hepatitis” means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis B is liver inflammation caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV). Each year in the United States, there are approximately 280,000 HBV infections. Each year, 8,700 health care workers become infected with HBV, and 200 die from HBV. In some people, HBV infection leads to cirrhosis and liver cancer.

The symptoms of HBV infection are like those of the flu. After exposure to the virus, it can take two to six months for HBV to develop. Initially, a person may be tired, nauseous, lose appetite, and have abdominal pain. As the disease progresses, the infected person may develop yellow skin and eyes (jaundice) and dark urine. Some people infected with HBV have no symptoms at all. Others become so ill they must be hospitalized. Some die.

Hepatitis B is spread by exposure to infected blood and other body fluids such as semen and vaginal secretions. The infected material enters through breaks in the skin or mucous membranes. While most HBV is transmitted sexually, the virus can also enter through cuts in the skin, needlesticks splashes into eyes or mouth, or areas of dermatitis where normal skin barriers have broken down.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) attacks the body’s immune system, causing the disease known as AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). People can carry HIV for years without having any symptoms. Eventually, the virus attacks the immune system and makes the person more susceptible to other diseases, such as pneumonia and cancer, which may be fatal. Symptoms of HIV infection can include weakness, fatigue, fever, sore throat, and diarrhea.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus is primarily transmitted through sexual contact but may also be transmitted through contact with blood and some other body fluids. The infected material enters through breaks in the skin or mucous membranes. There is no vaccination available to protect against HIV.