



# Communicable and Infectious Diseases Control Procedures and Universal Precautions

All About You – Disability Services requires employees to comply with this policy (including universal precautions) against the transmission of communicable diseases. This policy encapsulates the business' duty of care to participants and employees.

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## 1. Philosophy

These guidelines are designed to ensure that participants receive high quality services that do not compromise their health. The following guidelines apply in all instances. The core aspect of the infection control guidelines is the adoption of universal precautions. All employees must adopt universal precautions when working with participants and their families.

## 2. Communicable diseases

### Introduction

Communicable diseases are illnesses that can be transmitted from one person to another or from animals to humans. Communicable diseases may also be called infectious diseases.

Millions of micro-organisms live on and within the human body. Most of these are harmless and some are actually useful. These micro-organisms are called COMMENSALS.

A small number of micro-organisms cause disease. These are called PATHOGENS or GERMS. If these pathogens (germs) invade the body they can multiply and cause disease. The pathogen may be a bacterium, virus or fungus.

## How communicable diseases are transmitted

Communicable diseases may be spread in the following ways:

- **Airborne infection** (droplets infection) – when an infected person speaks, coughs or sneezes, droplets containing germs escape into the air which may then be inhaled by another person, causing disease such as a cold, influenza etc.
- **Direct physical contact with a person who is infected** (or an article that has been in contact with an infected person) – body fluid discharges ie blood, saliva, urine, faeces; of infected persons may carry disease-producing germs.
- **Indirect contact** – through towels, toothbrushes, razors, combs etc.
- **Contaminated food** – re-frozen foods, dented or damaged tinned foods, foods un-hygienically prepared or past the use-by date, may cause disease when eaten.
- **Contaminated water** – drinking, swimming or cleaning organic produce in contaminated water can lead to the spread of infection.
- **Animals and insects** – many forms of wildlife and domestic animals, such as pets can cause infection eg house flies spread disease by leaving harmful bacteria on food and/or eating utensils.
- **Human carrier** – persons who have the germs of a particular disease in their bodies but show no sign of disease.
- **Mild or "missed" cases** – persons who have a light case of a disease but do not seek medical care.
- **Soil and sand** – can harbour many micro-organisms which could cause infection.
- **Inoculation** – when germs enter the body via an insect bite or an open wound.

## 3. Universal precautions

The same precautions should be used for all participants regardless of their state of health, which can sometimes be unknown:

- Precautions apply particularly to blood and other body fluids containing visible blood. This includes: cerebral spinal fluid, synovial fluid, peritoneal fluid, pericardial fluid, amniotic fluid, semen and vaginal secretions, urine, faeces, respiratory secretions and wound discharges.
- Protective barriers should be used to reduce the risk of exposure to potentially infectious materials. This means that skin (especially damaged skin) and mucous membranes must be protected from exposure to such materials. If splashing is likely to occur, gloves must be worn, glasses should be worn to protect the eyes, and a mask should cover the nose and mouth. Personal protective equipment will be made available to all employees at All About You – Disability Services.
- Hands and other skin surfaces that are contaminated with blood or body substances should be immediately and thoroughly washed with water and soap.

- Measures should be taken to prevent contamination of the environment eg body fluids and wastes, by disposing of materials in sealed plastic bags.
- Surfaces and equipment which are contaminated with blood or body substances should be thoroughly cleaned and decontaminated with a cleaning agent which contains bleach or disinfectant.

## 4. Preventing the spread of infectious diseases

### Normal personal hygiene

The following guidelines are the responsibility of each individual. These guidelines promote health and limit the spread of infectious diseases:

- Wash hands in soap and water immediately after evacuating bowels or bladder.
- Wash hands and unclean articles.
- Keep articles that have been used for toilet purposes away from the mouth, nose, eyes and any wounds.
- Support workers supply own clean hand towel at work for drying hands.
- Participants to use own individual towels.
- Eating utensils must always be washed in detergent after use eg cups, forks, knives and plates.
- Wash hands before handling food.
- Wash hands thoroughly after assisting a participant or handling his/her personal belongings.
- Wash hands after smoking.

### Accidental exposure to blood/body fluids (ie vomit, faeces, urine etc)

In the event of accidental exposure to blood or body fluids, the following procedure should be implemented:

#### **Splashing blood or body fluids onto/into:**

- **Skin** – wash off as soon as possible with soap and water.
- **Mouth** – rinse thoroughly with water and/or alcohol. Do not swallow.
- **Eyes** – wash out immediately with water or normal saline (salt and water).
- **Minor cuts** – encourage bleeding, wash area gently with soap and water and follow with disinfectant ie Betadine ointment.

#### **Minor cuts and puncture wounds from articles contaminated with blood/body fluids:**

- Encourage bleeding, wash area gently with soap and water and follow with disinfectant eg Betadine ointment.

### **Spitting and/or biting:**

- Sputum should be treated as for splashes of blood.
- Bites should be treated as for puncture wounds.

**Please note:** All About You – Disability Services recommends Betadine only because it is a well-known brand. It should be used only as directed. If inflammation or irritation occur as a result of using this product, medical attention should be sought. This advice is not a substitute for medical attention, and a doctor should be consulted if there are any concerns.

### Infection control guidelines

Infection from contact with blood, vomit, saliva, urine, faeces and other body fluids or from articles/materials contaminated with any of the above may occur accidentally. Nevertheless, it is necessary for employees to observe the following standards at all times:

- Employ normal personal hygiene standards.
- Any cuts, abrasions or wounds including weeping eczema should be covered with an impermeable dressing eg Band-Aid.
- Always wash hands and lower arms thoroughly with soap and water after actual or potential contamination with infected articles/material. If this is not possible, apply Hexol, cover spill and wash as soon as possible.
- Avoid direct contact with blood or other body fluids names above. Wear disposable gloves, which will be readily available from the Managing Director.
- After contact with blood or other potentially infected material, place wastes in a plastic bag and seal for disposal.
- Always wash hands and lower arms thoroughly after removing disposable gloves or apply Hexol.
- Until hygiene measures have been completed, employees who have been contaminated by blood and/or body fluids must not eat, drink or smoke.

**Please note:** All About You – Disability Services recommends Hexol only because it is a well-known brand. It should be used only as directed. If inflammation or irritation occur as a result of using this product, medical attention should be sought.

### Reporting an incident

Should an accident/incident occur, complete an Incident Report form and return to the Managing Director within 48hrs. Employees should also verbally notify the Managing Director as soon as possible.

## 5. Methods for cleaning

### Method for Cleaning Blood/Body Fluid Spills (hard surfaces)

#### **Equipment:**

- Bleach (chlorine based)
- Disposable gloves
- Disposable cloth
- Disposable plastic bag
- Hot water and detergent

#### **Dilute bleach to recommended strength:**

1. Use gloves
2. Saturate disposable cloth in bleach
3. Cover spill
4. Leave 10 minutes
5. Wipe carefully and remove into disposable plastic bag
6. Wash area with hot water and detergent
7. Remove gloves into plastic bag
8. Seal bag and dispose - preferably by incineration
9. Wash hands

### Method for Cleaning Blood/body Fluid Spills (carpeted areas)

1. Use gloves
2. Wipe up spills
3. Place waste in plastic bag
4. Clean with detergents (bleach - hot water solution, dilute as directed) after patch testing
5. Place cloths in plastic bag
6. Remove gloves and place in plastic bag and seal for disposal
7. Wash hand and lower arms thoroughly or apply Hexol

**Please note:** Until hygienic measures have been completed, employees who have been contaminated by blood and/or body fluids must not eat, drink or smoke.

## 6. General procedures

The key to effective infection control is the use of universal precautions. Universal precautions treat agents such as blood and certain body fluids as potentially infectious rather than individual participants. All employees and volunteers are to apply universal precautions, as outlined previously.

If an existing participant is known to have contracted an infectious disease, the Managing Director should undertake an assessment to gauge the participants needs, and the safety requirements of staff.

Personal care should not be provided to participants known to have an infectious disease except when the household is regularly visited by specialised nursing staff that can monitor the provision of personal care.

All About You - Disability Services respect the privacy of participants. However, the Managing Director should make clear to the participant that their health, and the health of employees is of vital concern. Participants should be encouraged to inform the Managing Director if a person with an infectious disease is present in the household. The Managing Director must inform the employees of any risks posed by an infectious disease carried by a participant.

If the Managing Director is presented with an infectious disease control problem that is not mentioned in these guidelines, they should seek advice about appropriate precautions from the Tasmanian Department of Health and Community Services, Public Health Section in Hobart.

Employees should observe confidentiality in relation to participants and should be aware that a participant with an infectious disease may not have revealed this to their family, or to those around them.

Employees who provide support to participants known to have an infectious disease, must not divulge to other participants the nature of their illnesses. Breaches will result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

### Personal Safeguards

- If employees are likely to come into contact with participants' blood or body fluids, they must wear disposable gloves. All used gloves should be treated as infectious and should be discarded after use in sealed plastic bags.
- Plastic disposable aprons should be worn if it is likely that splashes or spills are expected, or if large amounts of soiling may occur. These must be safely disposed of after use in sealed plastic bags.
- Any cuts or abrasions on the hands should be covered for employees' protection.
- Employees should wash their hands before and after supporting every participant, and after each domestic assistance session.
- Respiratory complaints experienced by employees, participants or family members in the household should not be ignored, and medical advice sought immediately.

## General Housekeeping

### **Rubber Gloves**

Household rubber gloves are appropriate for undertaking household tasks. These should be washed with soap or detergent and hot water, both inside and outside, after use and hung up to dry. If they are properly cleaned, employees do not need to use a different pair of gloves in each household.

### **Material Disposal**

Material that has come into contact with blood and body fluids (for example, disposable gloves or sanitary and continence pads) are to be placed in a plastic bag and sealed for disposal.

### **Toilet Cleaning**

When cleaning the toilet, a toilet brush should be used with a cleaning agent containing bleach (eg Ajax). The outside and rim of the bowl should be wiped over with the same type of cleaning agent, and a damp cloth specifically used for that task. This cloth should be washed clean in hot water, and detergent before it is used again.

### **Bathroom Cleaning**

Baths and shower recesses should be cleaned with Ajax or a similar cleaning powder, which contains bleach. For general bathroom cleaning, a well-known brand of household cleanser should be used. Separate cleaning cloths should be used for the bathroom.

### **Bedroom Cleaning**

Normal cleaning of bedrooms is adequate except where clothing and bed lined has been soiled with blood or body fluids. Any solid matter should be removed using paper towels or tissues, and the clothing/linen should then be rinsed under cold running water before being laundered. Soiled linen and clothing should be laundered separately from other clothing.

### **Household Dishes**

Dishes should be washed in the usual way with hot water and detergent. They should be rinsed in hot water and allowed to dry.

## 7. Managing Director's responsibilities

### Managing Director:

- should ensure that disposable gloves and aprons, or any other necessary protective clothing are available for the use by employees as appropriate;
- is responsible for ensuring that employees are trained to recognise the need for and to implement universal precautions;
- must arrange for the reassessment of existing clients who are known to have contracted an infectious disease whilst receiving services from All About You – Disability Services, to ensure appropriate education in place as advised by medical practitioner on how to proceed with care. Where necessary withhold support until recommendations can be implemented to ensure employee safety without breaching participants' confidentiality which must be maintained at all times;
- is responsible for seeking advice from the Public Health Section of Community and Health Services, when dealing with a participant who has a problem relating to infection control, which is not mentioned in these guidelines;
- should ensure that participants are informed of the universal precautions practiced by All About You – Disability Services;
- must implement the guidelines relating to specific illnesses, and to employee's working conditions;
- is responsible for informing all female staff at the time of their employment that if they become pregnant they should seek medical advice about whether it is necessary for them to adopt any precautions in addition to those included in this policy (in order to protect the foetus from risks which may arise from certain infectious diseases); and
- is responsible for informing all participants who are known to be pregnant that a foetus may face risks from certain infectious diseases, and that they should inform the Managing Director if precautions, additional to those stated in this policy, should be implemented by employees.

## 8. Guidelines for specific infectious diseases

These guidelines refer to specific diseases as indicated and are to be adopted in specific situations, as opposed to the previous guidelines which are to be adopted by all employees in all situations.

### **Mumps**

The Managing Director should ensure that only employees who are certain that they are immune from mumps should work with participants who are known to have this disease. Employees will know if they are immune, if they are certain that they experienced a childhood occurrence of this illness, or if they receive a positive antibody test result.



## **Rubella**

Rubella poses serious risks to a foetus carried by a pregnant woman who comes in contact with this disease. Because rubella is difficult to diagnose, and because women cannot always be sure if they are pregnant or not (especially at an early stage), it is important that all women are vaccinated against this disease.

The great majority of Australian born females are vaccinated against rubella in their teenage years in order to minimise the public health risk.

Women who are unsure of their immunity to rubella should consult their doctor. Female employees who are not immune (perhaps because they were born in countries which did not provide a uniform vaccination program) should seek an anti-rubella vaccination, at their own cost.

## **Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B**

Due to the requirement to maintain participant confidentiality and privacy it cannot be disclosed to employees if a participant has Hepatitis A or Hepatitis B.

Employees are able to access, at their own expense, vaccinations for both Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. Employees are still required at all times to use universal precautions at all times with all participants whether they are vaccinated or not.

## **HIV and AIDS**

All employees should be offered accurate information about HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus, a precursor to AIDS) and AIDS, in order to dispel common misconceptions and fears about this disease.

If employees are aware that a participant with whom they are working is infected with HIV/AIDS, the Managing Director can inform the employee about HIV screening tests.

HIV testing should always be voluntary and accompanied by professional pre-test and post-test counselling.

## **9. Employment conditions for staff with infectious diseases**

When an employee has an infectious disease, the Managing Director shall:

- establish whether the employee is fit for work by requesting a medical certificate where necessary;
- direct the employee not to work if he/she is unfit to do so;
- if there is a risk to the employee or to the participant, direct that person not to work with that participant;
- provide alternative safe work for the employee if possible; and
- where alternative safe work is unavailable, direct the employee to apply for sick leave.

These points also apply in cases where the employee is carrying a mild infection such as a cold, if such an infection presents a serious risk to the participant (if for example, the participant is frail, has a chronic heart or lung condition or poor resistance to infection).