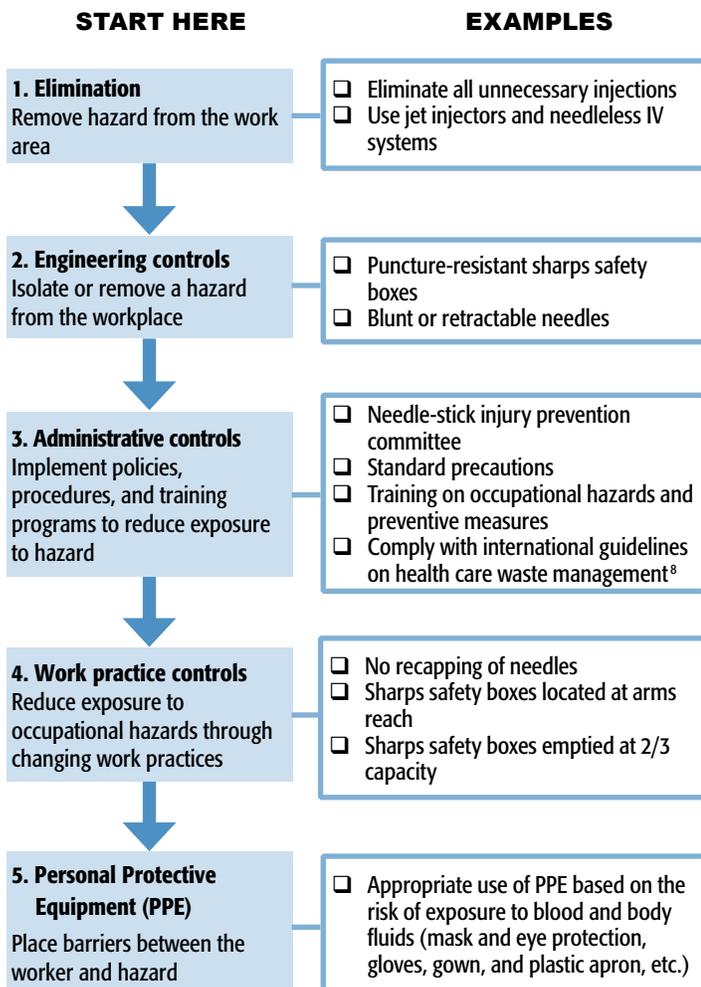


# Comprehensive Approach to the Prevention of Occupational Transmission of Blood-borne Pathogens Among Health Workers

## Key Elements at a Glance

### 1. Apply hierarchy of controls

Methods to control the transmission of blood-borne pathogens (BBPs) in order of effectiveness. The optimal prevention measure is to eliminate the hazard directly at the source.



### 2. Provide training to health workers

Health workers need to know their risk and how to protect themselves against blood-borne pathogens **Key training components include:**

- Risk of infection and mode of transmission; and efficacy of preventive measures
- Legal rights and obligations related to occupational health and safety
- Reporting procedures for needle-stick injuries and other blood and body fluid exposures
- Practice on the proper use of personal protective equipment
- Regular updates, training, and orientation on new products and procedures

### 3. Implement standard precautions

Standard precautions are a simple set of effective practices designed to protect health workers and patients from infectious pathogens from recognized and unrecognized sources. **These include:**

- Ensure hand hygiene products availability (e.g., clean water, soap, single-use clean towels, alcohol-based hand rub)
- Comply with WHO hand hygiene practices<sup>9</sup>
- No recapping of needles
- Use and availability of puncture- and liquid-proof sharps safety boxes at site of use
- Use proper personal protective equipment based on the type of exposure to blood (gloves, gown, mask and eye protection, face shield, etc.)
- Use gloves for contact with blood, non-intact skin, and mucous membranes
- Cover all cuts and abrasions on workers with a waterproof dressing
- Clean spills of blood promptly and carefully

### 4. Ensure access to post-exposure management

- Implement guidelines to include first aid, reporting mechanism, and procedure to be followed for post-exposure follow-up (risk assessment, prophylaxis, and management)
- Provide a conducive, blame-free, and confidential environment to workers reporting exposure
- Where possible and indicated, provide post-exposure prophylaxis (hepatitis B immune globulin for positive source) and hepatitis B vaccine if not previously immunized
- Record exposure by using a standard surveillance system (e.g., EPINet<sup>10</sup>)
- Use exposure record data for prevention by recommendations for changes in policy, practices or products

### Tools to prevent exposure to BBPs

PAHO, WHO, and the United States National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) have developed a free toolkit aimed at preventing BBP transmission:

#### 'Protecting Healthcare Workers: Preventing Needlestick Injuries Toolkit'

[http://www.who.int/occupational\\_health/activities/pnitoolkit/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/occupational_health/activities/pnitoolkit/en/index.html) (English)

[http://www.who.int/occupational\\_health/activities/pnitoolkit/es/index.html](http://www.who.int/occupational_health/activities/pnitoolkit/es/index.html) (Spanish)

Additional resources: Workers' Health and Safety in the Health Sector:

<http://www.bvsde.ops-oms.org/sde/ops-sde/ingles/bv-saludtrab.shtml>

### References

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