

30. Prevention of Communicable Diseases

The Health and Safety committee will review any relevant public health advisories and changes to WorkSafe regulations, and will disseminate information to employees, volunteers and sub-contractors as appropriate.

An employee or individual in our services whom we know has an infectious disease should be assessed on an individual basis in consultation with the supervisor, Executive Director and public health authority as to the risk to employees and others in the environment.

An employee or individual in our services who has or may have an infectious disease should stay home until cleared by a medical professional to resume work or other activities.

If, in the opinion of the Executive Director or public health authority, it becomes necessary to inform employees of any of the above infections, then the information should be restricted to those employees who "need to know." The individual or employee must be made aware of the need to inform and, if possible, should be a participant during the sharing of this information to ensure that everyone involved understands the situation.

Since blood and body fluids may carry various infectious agents, employees should adopt good hygiene practices and always observe Universal Precautions. See Policy #31.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personnel will be trained on any safety practices and provided with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) if they are supporting someone who is known to have a communicable disease. Full PPE kits, including face shield, goggles, gowns and shoe covers, will be provided on the recommendation of health care professionals.

For routine use of gloves and masks, please refer to Policy #31: Universal Precautions.

Guidelines for Preventing the Transmission of Tuberculosis (TB)

TB is transmitted by the inhalation of airborne organisms: infectious particles are generated when individuals with pulmonary TB (infection involving lung tissues, respiratory airways, or larynx) cough, sneeze, or speak.

Tubercle bacilli can stay airborne for up to 6 hours, but their concentration is decreased by the movement of air and exposure to direct sunlight. Tubercle bacilli on surfaces, such as linen, furniture, toys, books, and floors are not infectious and are not a significant infection hazard.

Guidelines for Preventing the Transmission of Covid-19

The novel coronavirus Covid-19 is spread by droplets, not aerosols. When someone sneezes or coughs, the droplets can become airborne immediately and pose a risk to others in close proximity if inhaled. The droplets can also settle on surfaces and the virus can survive on surfaces for several hours.

As with any infectious disease, observing universal precautions will help to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Because the virus can survive on surfaces for several hours, frequent hand-washing and cleaning of surfaces is also recommended.

Please refer to the Exposure Control Plan for more detailed information on preventing the transmission of Covid-19:

<https://sscl.sharevision.ca/public/Files/SpectrumExposureControlPlanCovid19.pdf>

Handling sharp items and needles:

All sharp items and needles should be considered potentially infectious. Care should be taken when handling or disposing of any sharp item.

If you accidentally prick yourself with a dirty needle or other sharp object:

- (i) If possible, put the pricked area low to the ground to promote bleeding
- (ii) Wash the area well with soap and water
- (iii) Call the local health unit, your own doctor and/or go to hospital and seek medical assistance immediately
- (iv) Inform the supervisor and complete a Worker's Report of Injury form

Immunizations

Spectrum does not require routine immunization for employees. However, where personnel are supporting individuals with complex health care or personal care, immunization can help to minimize the risk of exposure to infectious disease and protect both the employee and the individual.

HealthLink BC provides an overview of recommended immunizations for healthcare workers:

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/immunization-health-care-workers>