

## **INFECTION CONTROL, BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS, AND UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS**

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms that cannot be seen with the naked eye that are carried by human body materials such as:

- Blood
- Body fluids containing visible blood
- Semen and vaginal secretions
- Torn or loose skin or tissue
- Saliva in dental procedures
- Cerebrospinal Fluid
- Synovial Fluid
- Pleural Fluid
- Pericardial Fluid
- Peritoneal Fluid
- Amniotic Fluid

They can be spread through contact with infected blood or body fluids. If they get into the bloodstream, an individual may become infected and sick. Bloodborne pathogens can cause infection by entering the body through:

- Open cuts and nicks
- Skin abrasions and lesions
- Dermatitis
- Acne
- Mucous membranes of the mouth, eyes or nose
- Sex with an infected person

Most PCAs can reasonably anticipate coming into contact with body fluids or blood during their day-to-day work duties. That's why it's imperative that all personnel understand the danger of exposure to bloodborne pathogens and ways to minimize their risk. All PCAs are to follow Universal Precautions which means you treat all blood and potentially infectious body fluids as if they are infected.

### **Transmission and Symptoms**

#### **THE MOST COMMON BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS ARE HIV, HEPATITIS B, and HEPATITIS C:**

##### **HIV (AIDS)**

HIV, the human immuno-deficiency virus, attacks the body's immune system causing it to weaken and become vulnerable to infections that can lead to a diagnosis of acquired immune deficiency syndrome or AIDS. There is **not** a cure or vaccination for HIV.

HIV is transmitted mainly through sexual contact and sharing contaminated needles, but also may be spread by contact with infected blood and body fluids. HIV is NOT transmitted indirectly by touching or working around people who are HIV-positive.

- **Early AIDS Symptoms:** Fever, sweat, weight loss, loss of appetite, swollen glands, aches and chronic fatigue, skin rashes, diarrhea. The Human Immunodeficiency Virus, which causes AIDS, attacks the body's immune system, reducing the ability to fight disease.
- **Later Symptoms:** the victim may develop unusual types of cancer or infections, including pneumonia, which the body can no longer fight off.

Employees can prevent getting HIV by stopping the passage of the virus from a person who has HIV to them. In many instances, the employee has control over the activities that can transmit HIV. Since HIV is frequently transmitted by sharing needles or through sexual intercourse, employees can stop transmission by refusing to engage in these behaviors.

##### **Hepatitis B**

Hepatitis is a general term used to describe inflammation (swelling) of the liver. Alcohol, certain chemicals or drugs, and viruses such as hepatitis A,B,C,D,E and G may cause hepatitis. Hepatitis B(HBV)is a serious, sometimes fatal disease, caused by a virus that infects and attacks the liver. The virus is transmitted through direct contact with infected blood, semen, or vaginal fluid. It is primarily spread through

sexual contact. There are over a million carriers of HBV in the U.S. **HBV is 100 times more contagious than HIV.**

**HBV can also be transmitted indirectly because it can survive on surfaces dried at room temperature for at least a week!** That's why contaminated surfaces are a major factor in the spread of HBV. Fortunately there is a vaccine for HBV and a drug to prevent HBV infection if given soon enough after exposure. Protection from HBV last at least 13 years, if the series of injections is given as required. A new HBV requirement is antibody titre test. If exposed to HBV, you should receive Hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) within 14 days of exposure.

**Symptoms of HBV:** Flu-like vomiting and nausea, loss of appetite, fever, weakness, tiredness lasting for weeks or even months, abdominal pain in the area of the liver (upper right quadrant), dark urine, yellowing skin and eyes, muscle or joint aches.

Transmission of hepatitis B is preventable:

- Use condoms during sex
- Do not share needles
- Use universal precautions in the workplace
- Get the hepatitis B vaccination

### **Hepatitis C**

Hepatitis is a general term used to describe inflammation (swelling) of the liver. Alcohol, certain chemicals or drugs, and viruses such as Hepatitis A,B,C,D,E and G may cause hepatitis.

Hepatitis C is a serious, often fatal disease, caused by a virus that infects and attacks the liver. HCV is more common than Hepatitis B and ranks slightly below alcoholism as a cause of liver disease. However, HCV is not as infectious as HBV because there are generally lower levels of Hepatitis C virus in the blood than that of the Hepatitis B virus. Unlike Hepatitis B, currently there is **NO VACCINE** for Hepatitis C but there now are drugs to cure HCV infection after exposure. Anyone with Hepatitis C should be vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B. Anyone with Hepatitis C should not drink alcohol.

HCV is primarily transmitted through blood-to-blood contact—most commonly through shared needles. The risk of transmitting HCV through sexual contact appears to be low, but precautions should be taken anyway. HCV cannot be transmitted by casual contact such as shaking hands or sharing bathroom facilities. Other ways of transmitting Hepatitis C include:

|              |                     |   |
|--------------|---------------------|---|
| Razors       | Barber's Scissors   | Being born to a mother with Hepatitis C |
| Needles      | Acupuncture Needles |   |
| Toothbrushes | Tattooing           |   |
| Nail files   | Body Piercing       |   |

**Symptoms of HCV:** Very mild and flu-like, with nausea, fatigue, loss of appetite, fever, headaches and abdominal pain. Most people do not have jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), however, it can sometimes occur, as can dark urine.

Transmission of Hepatitis C is preventable:

- Use condoms during sex
- Do not share needles
- Use universal precautions in the workplace

### **OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES:**

**Hepatitis A** is spread from person to person by anal/oral contact and fecal contamination of food and water. Diaper changing tables in day care centers or public bathrooms can be a source of contamination and transmission of HAV virus. Symptoms of HAV include fatigue, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain. A Hepatitis A vaccine is available and trials have shown the vaccine is effective in preventing Hepatitis A in about 95% of people who are exposed.

**Tuberculosis(TB)** is a contagious airborne infection. It is a bacterial infection that can spread through the lymph nodes and bloodstream to any organ in your body but is most often found in the lungs. Infection is most likely to occur if you are exposed to someone with TB on a day-to-day basis, such as by living or working in close quarters with someone who has the active disease. Wearing masks can help stop the spread of active TB.

Most people who are exposed to TB never develop symptoms because the bacteria can live in an inactive form in the body which is not contagious. But if the immune system weakens TB bacteria can become active and can be fatal if left untreated. Symptoms of TB include loss of energy, poor appetite, loss of weight, fever. Medication can help get rid of inactive bacteria before they become active.

**MRSA** is a potentially dangerous type of staph bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics and may cause skin and other infections. MRSA is spread by contact such as:

- having direct contact with another person's infection
- sharing personal items, such as towels or razors, that have touched infected skin
- touching surfaces or items, such as used bandages, contaminated with MRSA

MRSA, like most staph skin infections, appears as a bump or infected area on the skin that may be:

- red
- swollen
- painful
- warm to the touch
- full of pus or other drainage
- accompanied by a fever

Treatment for MRSA may include having a doctor drain the infection and/or prescribing an antibiotic. People should not attempt to drain the infection themselves and should make sure to take all of the doses of the antibiotic even if the infection appears to be better. If a MRSA skin infection is suspected, cover the area with a bandage and contact a health care professional immediately. It is important to treat it early.

**Ebola** is a rare and often fatal disease caused by infection of one of the five Ebola virus species. Ebola viruses are found primarily in several African countries. These countries can experience deadly Ebola outbreaks and when this happens it is important to contain the virus by avoiding travel to or from the affected area.

Ebola is not spread through the air or by water or mosquitoes. Ebola is spread when there is direct contact with broken skin or unprotected mucous membranes in the eyes, nose or mouth and:

- blood or body fluids of a person who is sick with Ebola
- objects like needles and syringes that have been contaminated with the virus
- infected fruit bats or primates or meat of these animals.

A person infected with Ebola is not contagious until symptoms appear. Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to the Ebola virus, but the average is 8 to 10 days. Symptoms of Ebola include:

- fever
- severe headache
- fatigue/weakness
- muscle pain
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- stomach pain
- unexplained bleeding or bruising

People can recover from Ebola but this is based on the patient's immune system and good clinical care. People who recover develop antibodies for the disease and can no longer spread the virus. There is no FDA-approved vaccine or specific treatment available for Ebola but there are experimental vaccines and treatments for Ebola under development.

## Exposure Controls

Infection exposure control procedures are aimed at preventing infection and preventing the spread of infections. It is mandatory for your employer to offer the Hepatitis B vaccine. As a health care provider, A Caring Company, Inc (ACC) offers its PCAs the opportunity to obtain an adult tuberculin test as well as a hepatitis B vaccination/test at our company's expense. These are available to employees at the time of orientation or at any time while working for ACC. Employees need to fill out the appropriate authorization forms. These tests/vaccinations are offered as a precautionary measure and are usually not required to work for A Caring Company, Inc. On occasion, a client may require their PCA to have these tests/vaccination given their unique circumstances.

All PCAs are to practice Standard Universal Precautions which means you treat **all** blood and other potentially infectious body fluids/materials as if they are infected. This applies to:

- Blood
- All body secretions and excretions except sweat
- Non- intact skin
- Mucous Membranes

**Hand Washing:** All PCAs are trained on proper hand washing practices and should wash their hands frequently when caring for clients. Hand washing facilities are available in the bathrooms and kitchen at a client's home. If a PCA is not able to utilize hand washing facilities, they can make provisions for using antiseptic hand cleaner but use soap and running water as soon as possible afterwards. *Hand washing is the best way to stop the transmission of pathogens.* If a PCA incurs exposure to the skin or mucous membranes, then these areas must be washed or flushed with soap and water as appropriate as soon as possible following contact.

**Protective Equipment:** PCAs must wear protective gloves when there is a chance of exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials. **Wearing gloves is not a substitute to good hand washing. It is necessary to wash your hands before applying gloves and after removing them.**

Personal Care Assistants shall use gloves to accomplish the following job responsibilities if there is a potential for exposure to infectious material:

- Bowel and bladder care;
- Skin care, including prophylactic routine and palliative measures documented in the care plan that are done to maintain the health of the skin;
- Bathing;
- Grooming and hair washing necessary for personal hygiene;
- Assisting with dressing or undressing;
- Assisting with food, nutrition and diet activities;
- All other procedures involving contact with potentially infectious materials and exposure to blood.

Disposable protective gloves **must not be reused** and should be replaced after each use, or immediately, if they are torn or damaged, and as soon as possible if they become contaminated. Personal protective equipment shall be removed before leaving a client's home and placed in a garbage container.

General purpose utility gloves can be used for cleaning procedures only. They should never be used for patient contact.

In situations where eye, nose or mouth contamination can reasonably be anticipated, the use of masks in combination with eye protection devices, such as goggles or glasses with solid side shield or chin length face shields may need to be used. PCAs should contact their Qualified Professional and discuss the appropriate procedures.

All garments which are penetrated by blood or other potentially infectious material shall be removed immediately or as soon as feasible.

All personal protective equipment used at A Caring Company, Inc. shall be provided without cost to employees.

**Needles:** PCAs are allowed to bring capped needles to clients. Syringes are to be empty or pre-filled by a qualified professional. PCAs are not allowed to fill syringes. The client must self-inject or have a responsible party who will give the injections. At A Caring Company, Inc., disposal is only permitted by using sharps containers or equivalent for all sharps. PCAs are to bring the sharps container or equivalent to the client for sharps disposal by the client. A PCA is NOT allowed to touch needles or make any attempt to recap or dispose of them.

**Containers For Reusable Sharps:** Contaminated sharps that are reusable are to be placed immediately or as soon as feasible after use, into appropriate sharps containers. At A Caring Company, Inc., sharps containers are puncture resistant, labeled with a biohazard label, and are leak proof on the sides and bottom. In clients homes, sharps containers shall be placed in a safe area and shall be maintained by the client or responsible party. Legal sharps containers should have biohazard labels that are orange and red. Maintenance of sharps containers in clients homes are the responsibility of the client or responsible party.

**Work Area Restrictions:** In work areas where there is a reasonable likelihood of exposure to potentially infectious materials, employees are not to eat, drink, apply cosmetics or lip balm, smoke or handle contact lenses.

**Cleaning/Laundry:** The best cleaning fluid to destroy pathogens, including HIV, is 1:10 bleach/water solution. Standard laundering and dishwashing cycles **are** adequate for decontamination of linen, dishes, glassware and

eating utensils. However, if there are any visible signs of any potentially infectious body fluids, the PCA should wear gloves when handling and laundry should be washed separately using a 1:10 bleach solution. Basins, pails, cans and similar receptacles will be protected with a plastic liner and changed weekly or as needed.

**Exposure:** The company's Exposure Control Plan is in the Safety Manual, which is in a 3-ring notebook found in the bookcase in the office. The Expose Control Plan is also in the Employee Handbook. All employees are required to read and understand these requirements.

- When the employee incurs an exposure incident it should be reported immediately and **no later than within 24hrs** to the company's RN, Cheryl Bielke, who has the responsibility to maintain records of exposure incidents.
- Employees are required to fill out an incident report form.
- If exposed to a bloodborne pathogen by a puncture wound or contact with mucous membrane, wash the exposed area immediately and report the incident to your supervisor.
- All employees who incur an exposure incident shall be offered post-exposure evaluation and follow-up in accordance with the OSHA standard and current recommendations of the U.S. Public Health Service.
- Part of the post-exposure evaluation may include testing and vaccines depending on the pathogen.
- During all phases of follow-up, confidentiality of the employee should be protected.

## BODY MECHANICS

All A CC staff are responsible to maintain client safety and privacy, use proper body mechanics, and follow appropriate universal precautions

1. PCAs should perform pre-lifting warm up exercises for back injury prevention prior to beginning shift duties.
  - a. **Low back warm up:** Find a chair or bench. Sit with feet flat on the floor with back straight. Slowly rotate your shoulders right to left, and left to right. Repeat this about 20 times. (Note: you may hear or feel your spinal column re-align itself).
  - b. **Calf stretch:** Use a wall or other solid object to lean against. Pushing against the wall/object with both hands, stretch your calf muscles by putting one leg behind you with the foot flat on the floor and slowly stretching it out by leaning forward holding that position for up to one minute. Do not bounce while performing this exercise. Repeat this procedure with the opposite leg behind you.
  - c. **Thigh stretch:** Find something to steady yourself, like a chair or wall. Standing upright, using good posture, bring your ankle up behind yourself and grasp it with your hand on the same side of your body. Hold that leg up and to stretch for up to one minute. (Do not bounce) Repeat for opposite leg.
  - d. **Hamstring Stretch:** Find an object, such as a chair, that you can rest your foot on. Put one leg up on the seat of the chair. Keep your leg straight and point your toes. Bend over as if trying to touch your head to the knee of the leg, which is on the chair. Hold this position for up to one minute. (Do not bounce). Repeat this procedure for the opposite leg.
  - e. **Squat Exercise:** Find an open area and an object to steady you, such as a chair or wall. Do about 20 half squats in a slow deliberate manner not putting more than a 100-degree angle on your leg. Attempt to keep your upper thigh as parallel to the floor as possible.
2. PCAs will always assess the task to be completed. Then choose the most effective equipment. Decide on the safest way and most efficient way to perform a task.
3. When reaching for objects over the head, the PCA will obtain and use a stable step stool to avoid over stretching.
4. Whenever possible, the PCA will bring items up to a level where bending can be avoided, (i.e: when folding laundry or chopping food do so on a counter or while sitting at a table.) If a client has a hospital bed, put it in the high position before stripping or making the bed.
5. When reaching for items lower than waist level the PCA will place one foot forward to create a wide base of support. Then bend with knees allowing heels to lift off the ground, keeping back straight. To return to upright position, push with legs. Keep items close to your body.
6. When carrying heavy items, the PCA will keep them close to his/her body in order to maintain a better center of gravity.
7. When pushing items such as a wheelchair, vacuum, or mop, the PCA will push with legs keeping his/her back as straight as possible. Keep handle of mop or vacuum next to hip and step with legs in the desired direction.

8. When sitting for an extended period of time, the PCA will sit whenever possible with feet slightly elevated off the floor (i.e. use an old phone book or box-be creative) to reduce stress on lower back. Getting up to stretch frequently is encouraged.
9. When standing for an extended period of time, the PCA will stand comfortably with feet slightly spread, preferably with one foot more forward than the other. Whenever possible, obtain a sturdy item, such as a phonebook, to place your most forward foot on in order to reduce stress on your lower back.
10. When moving an item from one area to an adjacent area, the PCA will hold item close to his/her body and pivot to avoid twisting from the waist area.
11. When getting out of a vehicle, the PCA will turn body as a whole, avoid twisting at waist put both feet on the ground, and push up with legs. Perform this task in opposite sequence when getting into a vehicle.

***NOTE: PCA's ARE ENCOURAGED TO USE TRANSFER BELTS DURING TRANSFERS AND BACK SUPPORT BELTS AT ALL TIMES WHILE ON DUTY.***

## **CLIENT HEALTH**

PCAs play an important role in helping their client's meet their health and safety needs. All changes in a client's health status must be reported immediately to the Qualified Professional/Nurse. The nurse will be happy to discuss any and all options and take the necessary actions to assist in changes to PCA services to help meet changing client needs. When temporary increases are needed, especially after surgery, the nurse can request a temporary 45 day increase from the Public Health Nurse. All hospital stays must be reported to A Caring Company and recorded on the timesheets. PCAs cannot provide services while the client is in the hospital or similar facility.

### **Conditions For Calling 911**

Significant adverse changes in a client's condition may necessitate emergency contact by calling 911. Examples include but are not limited to having any doubt about the seriousness of a situation when the client has trouble breathing or has stopped breathing, has no pulse, is bleeding severely, has chest-jaw-arm pain, is unconscious or in a state of deteriorating consciousness, has a suspected fracture, is badly burned, is unable to move one or more limbs(previously able to be moved), is having a seizure, is suffering from hypothermia(below normal body temperature) or hyperthermia(well above normal body temperature), may have been poisoned, is having a diabetic emergency, is having a life-threatening allergic reaction(such as with bee stings), has suspected shock(skin is moist, cool, clammy and pale; rapid, weak pulse; rapid, shallow breathing), may have suffered a stroke, or has an unexplained change in personality including erratic behavior and/or disorientation.

## **CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY**

All A Caring Company, Inc.(ACC) staff are responsible to maintain client safety and privacy. Protecting the client's confidentiality is part of a PCA's job. Confidential information includes details about illnesses or conditions, client's personal information(name, phone, address, age, etc), information about treatments, photos or videos of a client, ACC's notes about a client, and conversations between a client and A Caring Company, Inc.

Confidential information cannot be released to ACC staff who have no "need to know" or unauthorized friends and family of the client. A client with HIV/AIDS or any other chronic or contagious illness has the right to keep this information private, even from family and partners.

PCAs cannot discuss confidential information with:

- One client about another client
- Relatives and friends of the client
- Representatives of the news media
- Fellow workers, except during care conferences
- The PCA's relatives and friends.

The PCA may only share client information with other ACC staff providing care to the client or ACC staff involved in billing and records maintenance. If a PCA is in doubt about someone's right to know they should discuss it with their Qualified Professional.