



Infection Control Policy

INFECTION CONTROL POLICY

Introduction

Micro-organisms are found virtually everywhere in the natural environment. Most of these are harmless to humans. However, certain micro-organisms can cause disease. Employers have a responsibility to assess the risks involved and to put into place any reasonable measures to control the risk of infection. Employees have the responsibility to ensure that they follow the procedures put in place.

Chain of infection

The process of infection can be represented as a chain – breaking a link in the chain at any point will control the risk of infection.

Source → Transmission → Host

Sources

There are five main sources of infection that need to be considered in the workplace:

- Blood and other bodily fluids (e.g. saliva) and sources of blood/body fluids such as human bodies and raw meat.
- Human and animal waste products such as faeces, urine and vomit.
- Respiratory discharges such as coughs and sneezes.
- Skin – direct contact.
- Eating or drinking contaminated food and water (this is covered in the food hygiene policy).

Transmission

To become infected the micro-organism has to get from the source into the host by some means.

Infection at work can occur via:

- Putting contaminated hands and fingers (or pens etc) into the mouth nose or eyes,
- Breathing in infectious droplets from the air e.g. respiratory discharges, contaminated dust,
- Splashes of blood and other bodily fluids into the eye and other mucous membranes such as the nose and mouth,
- Broken skin if it comes into direct contact with the micro-organism (or something contaminated by the micro-organism,

- A skin penetrating injury e.g. via a contaminated needle or other sharp object or through a bite by an infected animal or insect.

Infection can be transmitted person-to-person or animal to person.

Host

Unbroken skin and the lining of the mouth, throat, gut and airways all serve to provide a barrier to infection. The cells of these linings and the substances they produce are the body's first line of defence. If a micro-organism does manage to cross this barrier the next line of defence is the immune system. Whether or not an infection occurs depends on the contest between the micro-organisms and the immune system. The outward signs and symptoms of disease such as fevers or rashes are a result of this contest.

Some people may be more susceptible to infection than others, e.g. those with reduced immunity because of a pre-existing illness. JRH Support will check this before employees start work.

Preventative measures

- Wash hands before eating, drinking, preparing food, taking medicine, putting in contact lenses etc and after any activity where you may have become contaminated e.g. going to the toilet, touching raw meat.
- Cover wounds with waterproof dressings and/or gloves before starting any work activity where there is a risk of infection being transmitted.
- Avoid hand-mouth or hand-eye contact – don't put pens/pencils in mouths.
- Avoid coughing or sneezing over people – encourage the service users to use tissues.
- Clean all work surfaces regularly
- Ensure equipment is kept clean.
- Control pests such as rats and insects within the workplace.
- Where a person is bleeding and requires first aid from another person to stop the blood flow, the helper should ensure they wear disposable gloves and cover any wounds with a waterproof dressing,
- In the event of an injury involving blood or bodily fluids the following action should be taken:
 1. Wash off splashes on the skin with running water.
 2. Wash out splashes in the eye preferably using eyewash from fresh eye wash bottle (alternatively tap water), or nose or mouth with lots of tap water.
 3. Record the incident.
 4. Inform your Team Leader or Operations Manager.

- Any incident where blood is spilled on a hard surface should be cleaned up quickly using household bleach solution (one part bleach to nine parts water). The person cleaning up the spillage needs to wear disposable gloves.
- When disposing of any potentially contaminated waste, staff need to ensure that the waste material is placed in bags and securely binned.
- Any linen or clothing that is stained with blood or bodily fluids will be gathered up wearing disposable gloves and washed separately and immediately at a temperature of 60 degrees centigrade.
- Any spillage onto furnishings will be washed and cleaned safely (e.g. coverings machine washed at 60 degrees centigrade or thrown away if the blood cannot be washed off safely)
- Removal of dirty dressings should be done safely using disposable gloves and waste put immediately into bags and binned.

COMMON OCCUPATIONAL INFECTIONS

Common infections and their sources

	<i>Source of infection</i>			
	Blood, body fluids and body parts	Waste, eg faeces, urine and vomit	Significant skin contact	Infectious aerosols, eg coughs and sneezes, dusts, water droplets
People	Hepatitis B and C, HIV	Haemorrhagic colitis/ haemolytic uraemic syndrome, Viral gastroenteritis, Shigellosis, Salmonellosis, Hepatitis A	Ringworm	Tuberculosis
Animals – domestic/pets				
Cats		Toxoplasmosis	Ringworm	
Dogs		Toxocariasis, Leptospirosis	Ringworm	
Parrots etc	Chlamydiosis (Psittacosis)			
Animals – wild/exotic				
Rats		Leptospirosis		
Pigeons and other birds	Chlamydiosis	Salmonellosis		Chlamydiosis
Reptiles and amphibians eg terrapins		Salmonellosis		

Environmental micro-organisms

	Tetanus (soil)
	Legionellosis (natural and artificial water systems)
	Fungi and moulds
	Lyme disease (ticks found on animals and vegetation)

Key infections: Summary statements

Hepatitis A	
Causative agent	Hepatitis A virus
Natural hosts	Humans
Disease in humans	Depends on age – more severe in adult, common symptoms include fever, headache, jaundice, loss of appetite, vomiting and abdominal pain.
Transmission	Hand to mouth contact with faeces or contaminated objects
Hepatitis B	
Causative agent	Hepatitis B virus
Natural hosts	Humans
Disease in humans	Infection may cause acute inflammation of the liver (hepatitis) which may be life-threatening. A person showing no symptoms may still carry the infection.
Transmission	Contact with blood (and other body fluids which may be contaminated with blood) via a skin-penetrating injury or via broken skin. Through splashes of blood (and other body fluids which may be contaminated with blood) to eyes, nose and mouth.
Hepatitis C	
Causative agent	Hepatitis C virus
Natural hosts	Humans
Disease in humans	Acute infection may be without symptoms or mild. If disease progresses, most common complaint is fatigue. At least 50% of those with acute infection develop chronic hepatitis.
Transmission	Contact with blood (and other body fluids which may be contaminated with blood) via a skin-penetrating injury or via broken skin. Through splashes of blood (and other body fluids which may be contaminated with blood) to eyes, nose and mouth.
HIV (AIDS)	
Causative agent	Human immunodeficiency virus
Natural hosts	Humans
Disease in humans	Acquired immune deficiency disease and related conditions affecting the immune system
Transmission	Contact with blood (and other body fluids which may be contaminated with blood) via a skin-penetrating injury or via broken skin. Through splashes of blood (and other body fluids which may be contaminated with blood) to eyes, nose and mouth.
Legionellosis	
Causative agent	<i>Legionella pneumophila</i> (bacterium)

Natural hosts	Humans – but found naturally occurring in the aquatic environment.
Disease in humans	Ranges in severity from mild flu-like illness to the more severe pneumonic form, Legionnaires' disease.
Transmission	Breathing in contaminated water droplets, eg from cooling towers, showers, spa baths.

Lyme disease	
Causative agent	<i>Borrelia burgdorferi</i> (bacterium)
Natural hosts	Ticks
Disease in humans	Begins with skin rash, often associated with flu-like illness. Later cardiac, arthritic and/or neurological diseases may develop.
Transmission	Via the bite of infected ticks which are often found on the tips of vegetation waiting for a host to pass.
Leptospirosis	
Causative agent	<i>Leptospira icterohaemorrhagiae</i> , <i>L. hardjo</i> (bacterium)
Natural hosts	Rodents (<i>L. icterohaemorrhagiae</i>) Cattle (<i>L. hardjo</i>)
Disease in humans	Rodents – Weil's disease – fever, headache, vomiting, muscle pain, can lead to jaundice, meningitis and kidney failure – can be fatal. Cattle – cattle-associated leptospirosis – flu-like illness of short duration, often with headache.
Transmission	Rats – direct contact through breaks in the skin with infected urine or water contaminated with urine. Cattle – splashing of urine during milking and other close contact
Campylobacteriosis	
Causative agent	Most human illness is caused by <i>campylobacter jejuni</i> (bacterium)
Natural hosts	Farm animals, chickens, wild birds and household pets
Disease in humans	Abdominal pain, fever and nausea
Transmission	Hand-to-mouth contact with faeces or contaminated objects, handling of raw poultry during processing (contaminated with faeces)
Chlamydiosis	
Causative agent	<i>Chlamydia psittaci</i> (bacterium)
Natural hosts	Birds – caged, wild exotic birds, also poultry and pigeons. Sheep and goats
Disease in humans	Two forms of the disease: Birds – causes ornithosis/psittacosis – flu-like illness which may lead to pneumonia and in severe cases, endocarditis, hepatitis and death Sheep – causes ovine chlamydiosis – may cause abortion; flu-like illness

Transmission	Birds – breathing in infected respiratory discharges from infected birds or breathing in dust contaminated with faeces and/or respiratory discharges Sheep – contact with products of gestation, eg placentae, amniotic fluid or contaminated objects, eg bedding
Fungi and Moulds	
Causative agent	Various species – likely to be found contaminating damp areas or naturally occurring in soil, eg <i>Aspergillus</i>
Natural hosts	Found widely in the environment
Disease in humans	Can cause infection and allergy
Transmission	Breathing in spores, for example in dust liberated when sweeping or handling mouldy hay, also when carrying out building work
Ringworm	
Causative agent	Trichophyton – various species of the fungus
Natural hosts	Humans, cows (and some other farm animals)
Disease in humans	Causes inflamed, swollen, crusty skin lesions mainly on hands, forearms, head and neck
Transmission	Direct skin contact with infected animal – spores enter through breaks in the skin.
Shigellosis	
Causative agent	Various species of the bacterium <i>Shigella</i>
Natural hosts	Humans
Disease in humans	Bloody diarrhoea – disease severity depends on infecting species
Transmission	Hand to mouth contact with faeces or contaminating objects.
Tetanus	
Causative agent	<i>Clostridium tetani</i> (bacterium)
Natural hosts	Humans and animals, but spores of the micro-organisms occur widely in the environment eg soil
Disease in humans	Exaggerated reflexes, muscle rigidity and uncontrolled muscle spasms – lockjaw
Transmission	Organism enters via breaks in skin.
Tuberculosis	
Causative agent	<i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis</i> (bacterium)
Natural hosts	Humans
Disease in humans	Disease develops slowly, usually takes several months for symptoms to appear, symptoms include fever and night sweats coughing, losing

	weight and blood in phlegm and spit.
Transmission	Breathing in infectious respiratory discharges

Viral gastroenteritis	
Causative agent	Mostly commonly small round structured viruses – Norwalk-like viruses
Natural hosts	Humans
Disease in humans	Vomiting, diarrhoea, fever
Transmission	Hand-to-mouth contact with faeces or contaminated objects, also from breathing in aerosols of projectile vomit – this can lead to environmental contamination, especially of toilets