Dartmouth
GEISEL SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens (BBP) and Other Occupational Exposures or Injuries Policy

Summary of Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to alert students to the procedures of exposure to hazardous occupational materials.

Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all Geisel medical students.

Definitions

None.

Policy Statement

Steps to take in case of BBP exposure

1. If an exposure should occur, the exposure site should first be thoroughly washed and/or irrigated. If you think you may have had an exposure but are not sure you should be evaluated. There is absolutely no such thing as a low-risk patient. Contact Occupational Medicine at 603-653-3850 to discuss your concerns with a clinician.

2. You should then promptly report the incident to your supervising attending or resident and immediately seek evaluation by the staff / facility designated for your clinical site to provide evaluation and treatment of health care workers who have sustained a BBP exposure. Time may be critical for preventive measures. Have your insurance information available unless accessing it would delay your evaluation.
    a. **Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center**
        i. At DHMC the designated staff/facility is Occupational Medicine during normal working hours. Occupational Medicine at DHMC is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. and is always staffed by a health care provider with training in evaluating potential BBP exposures. The department phone number is 653-3850. At DHMC you can also call the BUZZ Hotline at 650-6000 at any time to expedite your blood-borne exposure work-up evaluation. At DHMC when Occupational Medicine is closed the same services are provided by the House Supervisor (formerly

ACOS). Page the House Supervisor and they will instruct you how to proceed. It is important to call the House Supervisor as they will make all efforts to investigate the source of your exposure. You may not need an ED visit so consult the House Supervisor prior to going to the emergency room to expedite and coordinate your care. If the source of your exposure is unknown, please page the House Supervisor to discuss. In this case an ED evaluation may be warranted.

b. **White River Junction Veterans Affairs Hospital**
    i. Students at the White River VA Hospital and students at clerkship sites near Hanover and Lebanon may also utilize the Occupational Health Services at DHMC for initial evaluations. Effective management of HIV exposure may require the administration of antiviral drugs within hours of exposure. Obviously in cases when there is an emergency, the student would always seek the nearest emergency evaluation to their clerkship site. Students should cooperate with the evaluation, treatment, and follow up recommendations made at the time of their exposure assessment. All follow-up visits for students at the White River VA Hospital and at nearby clerkship sites will be done at Occupational Medicine at DHMC.

c. **Sites Outside of Lebanon/Hanover**
    i. In the very rare circumstance that an attending or resident is unsure of where you should seek evaluation call student services at Geisel during day hours or Geisel on Call at other times (603-650-1509 or through Dartmouth Safety and Security 603-646-4000).

3. It is mandatory that exposures be reported to Student Life (603-650-1509). All staff members in student life are trained to take this report. They will verbally review the process including payment information, answer questions, and send each student a check list. All students will have received a laminated card which attaches to their nametags at year three orientation which summarizes this process.

4. Even in situations where payment is not requested, students should report ALL such accidental occupational exposures to BBPs to the Office of Student Life. Any concerns or questions regarding this policy may be addressed by contacting the Associate Dean of Student Life. The Office of Student Life tracks all such incidents experienced by our students at any of our affiliate teaching institutions or at other nonaffiliated teaching sites (such as during off-site electives). Student Life will pay for all costs related to occupational exposures that are not covered by a student's insurance. Students should submit the bill of all costs not covered by insurance to Student Life who will directly pay your care provider. The alternative option is for students to pay out-of-pocket for services not covered by their insurance provider and request funding from Financial Aid to cover this expense until they receive reimbursement money from Geisel (3-6 weeks). Documentation of insurance billing is required prior to reimbursement from Student Life.

5. Follow-up appointments for students who are in or near the Hanover/Lebanon area will be done at DHMC Occupational Medicine regardless of where the student sustained the exposure. If a student is due for follow-up and not near Hanover/Lebanon, then follow-up will be managed at the distal site. Any questions should be directed to the staff in Student Life. It is important for students to bring their insurance information to all follow-up visits.

Components of Exposure Evaluation

- Your post exposure evaluation should include a risk assessment of the potential for HIV transmission based on the type of body substance involved, as well as the route and severity of the exposure.

- In addition, arrangements should be made to evaluate the person whose blood or body fluid was the source of your exposure. This is generally done through established institutional protocols that will be initiated by the health care provider evaluating your exposure and may include serological assessment of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV infection. In the absence of known source HIV status, clinical information about the source, if known, will be used to suggest or rule out possible HIV infection.

- Using an algorithm established by the public health service, the risk assessment of both the severity of your exposure and the HIV status of the source will be used to determine whether post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for HIV is recommended. If indicated, PEP should be initiated as soon as possible after an exposure (within a few hours) thus emphasizing the importance of prompt post exposure evaluation. If HIV PEP is initiated then medical follow up, further lab studies, and additional counseling should occur.

- You might undergo baseline testing for susceptibility to BBPs at the time of your exposure including antibody to HIV. The treating clinician will determine this need based on source information and or lab results. The need for and appropriate interval for follow-up testing will depend to some degree on the source patient's test results as well as your baseline status. It is important to note that there is no recommended post exposure prophylaxis for Hepatitis C which is a more prevalent blood borne pathogen than HIV. Follow-up testing after an exposure to a source infected with Hepatitis C is extremely important.

Resources for occupational exposure to blood:

- BUZZ Exposure Hotline: 650-6000.
- DHMC Occupational Medicine: 603-653-3850
- Clinicians Post-Exposure Hotline: 888-448-4911

Background Information and Prevention

- Students may be exposed to bloodborne pathogens (BBPs) during their clinical and research duties. These BBPs include the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and Hepatitis C virus (HVC). An exposure is generally defined as a percutaneous injury (a needle stick or cut with a sharp object), contact of mucous membrane or non-intact skin with blood, tissue or body fluids that are contaminated with visible blood. Current estimates of average risk of transmission after percutaneous exposure are HIV 3/1,000 (0.3%), Hepatitis C 1-3%, Hepatitis B 30% (in non-immune).

- Observing standard precautions is the single best strategy to reduce the risk of BBP exposure. This includes using adequate barrier protection (gloves, safety glasses, mask) when performing any activities where the potential exists for BBP exposure. Familiarity with and use of safety devices on needles, syringes, and intravenous equipment can also reduce your risk of accidental BBP exposure but will vary between medical institutions. Completion of the Hepatitis B immunization series with documented presence of antibody to Hepatitis B should provide full protection from transmission of this virus.

Other Occupational Exposures and Injuries

Students with other occupational exposures or injuries should access evaluation and care by following the same procedures and policy outlined above for BBP. Examples of other occupational exposures and injuries would include exposure to tuberculosis, or an injury sustained while caring for a violent patient.

If a student sustains acute injuries, then emergency room access would precede calling Occupational Medicine. All exposures and injuries require that a mandatory report is made to any staff member in Student Life (603-650-1509). This allows individualization of care and follow-up for unusual /unique exposures and injuries. Student injury not requiring occupational medicine involvement at DHMC, will be reported to Occupational Medicine.

In the case of student reporting that an attending physician or resident did not encourage evaluation for an occupational exposure because the patient involved was low risk both the clerkship director and Assistant Dean for Core (Phase 2) or Advanced (Phase 3) Clinical Curriculum will be notified ASAP.

Resources for other occupational exposures:

- Hanover Police: 911
- Headrest: 603-448-4400
    - Headrest is a local 24-hour hotline that provides counseling and referral for the entire community for a broad range of issues.
- Geisel Student Life: 603-650-1509
- Dartmouth College Safety and Security (Dean on Call): 603-646-4000
- Women’s Health Program at the Health Service: 603-646-9401

    - The Women's Health Program provides gynecological exams, sexually transmitted infection testing and counseling, contraception counseling, emergency contraception, and other services to women and their partners. Students may request a personal appointment without going into medical specifics. Be sure to mention that it's urgent if this is the case, so that you can be seen quickly.
- Women's Information Service (WISE): 603-448-5922
    - WISE provides 24-hour sexual and domestic violence hotline and crisis intervention volunteers to accompany survivors of sexual abuse to area hospitals, police stations, and courts. It is a resource for the entire community. The WISE advocate is on campus Mondays from 8am-4pm in 37 Dewey Field Road, room 452 and may be seen with or without an appointment.
- EthicsPoint
    - In addition, although NOT an emergency resource and reporting should normally be made through standard channels, Dartmouth has also contracted with EthicsPoint, an independent third party to serve as a web-based point of contact for concerns. This service supplements existing offices on campus that typically help register such concerns. These concerns may include issues such as sexual assault or abuse, academic and research misconduct, child abuse, financial misconduct, or confidentiality concerns. Dartmouth College Risk and Internal Controls Services.

Procedure

None.

LCME Standard

Standard 12.8 – Student Exposure Policies/Procedures
A medical school has policies in place that effectively address medical student exposure to infectious and environmental hazards, including the following:

- The education of medical students about methods of prevention
- The procedures for care and treatment after exposure, including a definition of financial responsibility
- The effects of infectious and environmental disease or disability on medical student learning activities
- All registered medical students (including visiting students) are informed of these policies before undertaking any educational activities that would place them at risk.

Related Information: Documents, Policies, Links, Etc.

Clerkship Contact List
Geisel On Call

Policy Administration

Policy Number:	UME-OSL-0020		
Reviewed By:	Associate Dean, Student Life	**Effective Date:**	June 1, 2012
Approved By:	UME Affairs	**Last Date Approved:**	June 1, 2019

Policy Contact Information

Office of Student Life
Geisel.Office.of.Student.Life@dartmouth.edu

History

Date	History
June 1, 2012	Policy created and put into effect.

June 1, 2019	Policy was reviewed and revised.
October 16, 2024	Policy reviewed and revised to reflect transition to Office of Student Life and updated template.
April 15, 2025	Updated to new policy template.

Background

None.