

## Communicable Diseases

### Introduction

This guideline outlines the management of risks associated with work-related communicable diseases through contact with animals or animal products or contact with human blood and body fluids including contact with discarded used drug injecting needles.

### Definition

A work-related communicable disease is an illness caused by micro-organisms and transmitted from an infected person or animal to another person or animal.

### Roles

Academic Units and Research Institutes should undertake the following:

- follow this guide in their area of responsibility and accountability
- identify work related communicable disease hazards
- complete risk assessments and implement appropriate risk control measures in consultation with employees and others.

Staff, Students, Volunteers and others should:

- not place themselves or others at risk of injury
- report any work-related communicable disease hazards to their manager or Health and Safety Representative as soon as becoming aware of them
- participate in the development of appropriate risk control measures for identified hazards to eliminate or minimise risk
- use control measures and any other action as required, which is designed to protect health and safety
- participate in vaccination programs where available and recommended.

Health and Safety Representatives can assist Managers and staff in the identification and assessment of communicable disease health and safety risks.

### Workplace risk

The majority of University work does not involve a risk of contracting a work-related communicable disease.

Some people are at risk because their work involves possible exposure through contact with animals or animal products or contact with human blood and body fluids including contact with discarded used drug injecting needles.

Workers who may be at risk in University workplaces include cleaners, plumbing and waste disposal workers, first aid officers, and those who work in biological laboratory or field environments.

### **Risks from animals or animal products**

The hazards associated with work-related communicable disease through contact with animals or animal products in biological laboratory and field environments shall be identified.

Risk assessments should be undertaken using Form [WHS 2 – General Risk Assessment](#) to determine the level of risk and appropriate control measures required for implementation.

Staff using syringes as part of their work requirements where there is a potential for needlestick injury and subsequent contact with blood and other body fluids, should follow the risk control measures developed for the particular work process.

Consideration should be given to:

- taking standard precautions including vaccination
- eliminating, or redesigning work practices where there is risk of exposure to animals or animal products
- developing written procedures for safe work practices
- providing education, information and training
- instituting appropriate infection control procedures
- ensuring exposure incidents are managed with immediate consultation with a medical practitioner who has expertise in treating infectious diseases.

### ***Risks from human blood and other body fluids***

The hazards associated with exposure to communicable disease through potential contact with human blood and other body fluids is through needlestick injury and/or transmission of blood borne pathogens including Hepatitis B-C & HIV/AIDS.

Any member of staff, visitor or student finding needles or syringes should contact Security immediately on the internal phone, **88888** or **1800 500 911** and advise the location. It should be noted that some workplaces may have developed their own disposal methods for sharps and staff should continue to follow agreed practices for disposal.

The following process should be adhered to for the disposal of needles and syringes undertaken by Security staff to prevent exposure:

- sharps should not be handled; use forceps and a sharps disposal container. (Sharps disposal containers are located in Security offices and health centres. Gloves can be used for this process; however, staff should be aware that surgical gloves do not provide a barrier against needlestick injury).
- determine location of needle and or syringe
- take sharps disposal unit and forceps to the site
- using a “non-touch” technique firmly grip the item with forceps and place directly and immediately into the sharps container
- under no circumstances attempt to remove a needle
- wash hands with soap and water on return to the Security office
- complete an [online hazard report](#).

Disposal shall be made into a bio-hazard bin by the end user which is then collected by an authorised waste stream provider.

### ***Needlestick injury or exposure to blood / body fluids***

In the case of a needlestick injury or exposure to blood / body fluids, seek urgent medical attention. Follow the WHS Procedure – Hazard/Incident Reporting and Investigation and complete and submit online [Incident Report](#).

### **Resources**

[Safety & Wellbeing website](#)

WHS Procedure – Managing workplace health and safety risks

WHS Procedure – Hazard/Incident Reporting & Investigation

### **References**

[Communicable Disease Control Branch, Public Health SA](#)

[National Health and Medical Research Council – Infection Control in the Health Care Setting Guidelines for the Prevention of Transmission of Infectious Diseases](#)

[Australian National Council on Aids](#)