

HIGHLIGHTS

from the BC Centre for Disease Control's

Guidelines for Infection Prevention and Control in the Physician's Office, 2004

Over the last 10 years several new viral pathogens have appeared in human populations both here in BC and abroad (Avian Influenza H5N1 and SARS-CoV). We have also seen the re-emergence of other well known infectious diseases such as measles and TB. *It is time to reassess our current practice patterns and commit to a 'NEW STANDARD' for infection prevention and control in the outpatient setting*[†]

Routine Infection Control Practices

Routine infection control practices are to be used with all patients, at all times, regardless of presumed infectious status or diagnosis. Routine Infection Control Practices include:

- The separation of infected, contagious patients including those with respiratory symptoms from uninfected patients.
- Hand cleaning should occur before and after every patient contact. Wash hands with soap and warm water for 15 to 30 seconds. Waterless (alcohol- based) hand antiseptics are also effective. Soap and water should be used if hands are visibly soiled.
- Gloves should be used as an additional measure, not as a substitute for hand washing.
- Personal Protective Equipment, such as gowns, masks and eye protection should be worn during patient care activities likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions.
- Mouthpieces and resuscitation bags should be available for performing CPR.
- Safe handling and disposal of needles and other sharp devices.
- Appropriate sterilization and disinfection of reusable equipment and office surfaces (counters, furniture) must be routine.

[†]*Outpatient settings include, but are not limited to, ambulatory care clinics, physicians' offices, walk in clinics and community health centres.*

Preventing Transmission

Preventing the transmission of infectious diseases spread by either airborne or droplet routes poses a significant challenge in the outpatient setting. Special arrangements for patients with a suspected respiratory infection can reduce this risk. These include:

- Screening patients at the time the office visit is scheduled.
- Making efforts to see these patients at the end of the day.
- Quickly triaging these patients out of common waiting areas.
- Closing the door of the examining room and limiting access to the patient by visitors and staff members who are not immune to the suspected disease.

Preventing the transmission of infectious diseases spread by direct contact such as antibiotic resistant organisms (e.g. MRSA, VRE) require special attention to decrease the likelihood of spread. Patients may harbour resistant bacteria as part of their respiratory or gastrointestinal tract flora for an extended period. Precautions include:

- Disinfecting surfaces and equipment that have been in direct contact with the patients immediately after a visit.
- Patients known to be carriers of these organisms should have this indicated in their medical record in order to facilitate recognition on subsequent visits.

Occupational Health

Patients and health care providers are at risk from persons who are either infected with or carriers of an infectious agent:

- Written policies should exist regarding exclusion of health care providers with contagious illness.
- All health care providers should be screened for tuberculosis on hiring or on exposure to an infectious patient. In practices where there is high rate of documented tuberculosis amongst patients screening should be done yearly.
- A system for the rapid evaluation, first aid and referral for treatment for persons exposed to blood and body fluids (BBF) must be in place as mandated by the WCB.

Where can you Find “Guidelines for Infection Prevention and Control in the Physician’s Office”?

Go to <http://www.bccdc.org/content.php?item=76>

What Resources are Available to Physicians?

- **Prevention Information Line**
WorkSafeBC offers support for workers, employers and others who have questions or concerns about occupational safety and health. The Prevention Information Line at (604) 276-3100 or toll-free in B.C. at 1-888-621-SAFE (7233).
- **WorkSafeBC Health Care Safety at Work Web Site**
We have developed a comprehensive web site dedicated exclusively to the safety of health workers. It includes a broad range of information about musculoskeletal injuries and ergonomics, violence, needlesticks, infectious diseases, latex allergies, home care and cytotoxic drugs. You can access it by following the links from the WorkSafeBC web site at <http://www.worksafebc.com/> or directly at <http://www2.worksafebc.com/Safety/Home.asp>
- **BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC)**
<http://www.bccdc.ca>
- **The Occupational Health and Safety Association for Healthcare in BC (OHSAH)**
There are many healthcare publications on the site, and three searchable databases: latex free products, MSDS data sheets, and OSHtips. Go to <http://www.ohsah.bc.ca>

Health Care, Industry & Labour Services, WorkSafeBC Contact Information:

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