HIV: Infection Control

Guidelines to prevent the spread of HIV

This handout provides guidelines to help prevent the spread of HIV and other infections. This guideline is written for:

- Children and adults living with HIV
- Those who care for children with HIV
- Anyone who comes into contact with blood or body fluids that contain blood (whether it came from someone with HIV or not)

Why is hand washing important?

Good hand washing helps your family prevent and avoid infections. It is one of the best ways to kill germs. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. To learn more, read our handout: Hand Washing.

When should hands be washed?

Hands should always be washed before:

- Making, serving or eating food

Hands should always be washed after:

- Using the bathroom
- Changing a diaper
- Helping a child use the bathroom
- Wiping a runny nose
- Sneezing or coughing (if your child forgets to sneeze or cough into their elbow)
- Using a tissue
- Coming into contact with body fluids (blood, vomit, urine, feces or semen)
- Giving first aid
- Removing gloves after handling body fluids

Gloves should be worn when:

- You handle blood or body fluids, give first aid or when picking up items touched by blood or body fluids.

What are some hand washing tips?

- Use colorful soap made for kids. Some come in fun scents or shapes that make washing hands fun.
- Wash hands with your child. Let them practice by washing your hands to show you they know how.
• Have your child sing a favorite short song (the ABC song works well) while soaping up. This helps to make sure they take enough time to do a good job.
• Carry a small bottle of waterless hand sanitizer, like Purell, for washing hands on the go, like on the bus, in the car or during outings.

Besides hand washing, what can I teach my child about infection control?
• Teach your child to sneeze or cough into the inside of their arm (at the elbow) instead of in their hand to help prevent the spread of germs.
• Help your child keep their fingernails short and clean.
• Help your child to avoid biting their nails.
• Teach your child to keep their hands and fingers out of their mouth.
• Teach your child not to share toothbrushes or razors with anyone.

How do I dispose of sharp items?
• Teach your child to tell you if they see a sharp object.
• Wear gloves whenever you contact sharp objects. Never pick up needles, broken glass or other sharp objects with bare hands.
• Place sharp objects in a sealed container, or wrap them with care so they do not cut you or someone else. Do not put sharp objects directly into the trash. Wrap sharp objects in a paper bag or safe container before throwing them away.

What about other litter?
• Avoid touching litter that may contain body fluids. This includes Band-Aids, tissues or feminine hygiene products (such as pads or tampons, etc.). If an item must be picked up, use gloves. Teach your child to not touch these items.
• If gloves are not available and an item must be picked up, use some other form of barrier, such as a piece of paper or a few tissues. Then, wash your hands.
• Wrap used sanitary pads in layers of paper towel or toilet paper and place them in a proper container. In public restrooms, there is almost always a special container for these items in the stall.
• Wrap used tampons in layers of paper towel or toilet paper before putting them in the trash.

What if my child gets a cut or has a nosebleed?
• Teach your child to attend to their own first aid needs. Young children can learn to wash their skin and apply a bandage to a small scrape.
• Always wear gloves when you handle blood or items with blood on them. Teach your child how to put gloves on and to use them whenever they touch blood, even their own.
• Teach your child to stop right away if they begin to bleed while playing or doing sports. The cut should be cleaned and bandaged. They should take off any clothes that contain blood before they return to play.

• For nosebleeds, tip your child’s head forward and pinch their nose firmly on the soft parts of both sides of the nose (above the nostrils and below the bridge of the nose). Do this for a full 5 minutes. Have them lean forward and spit out any blood in their mouth. Once bleeding has stopped, clean yourself and your child and remove and wash clothes that contain blood. Also, be sure to tell your child to avoid picking, rubbing or blowing their nose. If your child’s nose starts bleeding again, pinch it firmly for 10 minutes.

• After dealing with a cut, scrape or nosebleed, always wash your hands with soap and water.

What other things should we be concerned about?

• If your child bites someone and breaks the skin, wash the area right away with soap and water just as you would for any human bite wound. Then, call your child’s doctor.

• Clothing worn by someone infected with HIV can be washed with the laundry from other family members.

Cleaning spills

For spills of body fluids such as urine, blood, feces, vomit or semen:

1. On surfaces such as floors, counters, bathtubs, etc., wear disposable gloves and clean up the spill with paper towels or disposable rags.

2. Then, clean the area with a mixture of 10 parts water to 1 part of disinfectant (like household bleach). Wipe the surface. Let it air dry.

3. Place all of the used towels or rags in a leakproof container, such as a plastic bag, and place it in an outdoor trash container.

4. For skin contact, wash with soap under running water for at least 10 seconds.

5. For spills on bedding or other items that can be washed, follow the same instructions as for clothing.