BLOOD-BORNE PATHOGEN TRANSMISSION RISK AMONG FIRST RESPONDERS

First responders have an occupational risk of contact with blood-borne pathogens (BBPs) or body fluids.

What viruses am I at risk for?

**HIV**
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is spread through the blood or body fluids of a person who has HIV.
- Left untreated, the virus can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), which affects your immune system and its ability to fight infections.

**Hepatitis B**
- Hepatitis B (HBV) is spread through the contaminated blood or body fluid of a person who has HBV.
- Chronic HBV can lead to serious health issues, including liver scarring or liver cancer.
- HBV can be prevented with vaccination.

**Hepatitis C**
- Hepatitis C (HCV) is spread through the contaminated blood of a person who has HCV.
- Chronic HCV can cause serious health problems, including liver disease, liver failure, and liver cancer.
- There is no vaccine for preventing HCV.

How am I at risk?

- **Needlestick injuries** (wounds caused by needles that puncture the skin).¹
- **Cut or bite exposures, where blood is present.¹**
- **Exposure to blood in the eyes, nose, or mouth, and contact on broken or cracked skin.¹**

Survival of the virus outside the body

- Hepatitis C can survive in dried blood outside of the human body for **up to three weeks.²,³**
- After HIV-infected blood has been drawn into the syringe and flushed out, HIV may survive for **up to four weeks in syringes.¹**
What can I do to protect myself?

1. PREVENT

Hepatitis B Vaccine

Prevent your risk of Hepatitis B infection and get vaccinated for Hepatitis B!

2. PROTECT

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Use PPE, such as gloves, eyewear, or protective clothing, to prevent exposure to blood or body fluids.

Avoid Exposure to Broken Skin

Cover open cuts and wounds.

Safely Handle and Dispose Sharp Objects

Do not attempt to recap a syringe. Dispose of sharp objects in puncture-proof containers.

3. RESPOND

Wash needlesticks and cuts with soap and water.°

Report all incidents, injuries, and exposures to your supervisor.°

Immediately seek medical treatment.° Get tested and practice safe behaviors while waiting for test results.

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a way to prevent HIV and/or HBV infection after a recent, possible exposure to the virus.

Sources:
2. www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/sfaq.html#F4031
3. wwwacademicoupcom/jid/article/209/8/1205/83800
5. www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/bbp/emergedd.html