

## Guidelines for Needlestick and Body-Fluid Exposures for Health Science Center Students\*

It is recommended that you receive treatment within two hours of a needlestick or body-fluid exposure. You are encouraged to seek counseling at the [Student Health Center](#) so that your degree of exposure can be assessed and to assure appropriate data is collected on the source patient. With this necessary counseling, you will be in a better position to manage both your exposure and the related costs.

*\*Students must be registered in credit courses for this policy to apply.*

- 1.If you sustain an injury with a needle or other sharp object that has been exposed to a patient's body fluids, or if you splash a patient's body fluid onto broken skin or mucous membranes, you may be at risk to contract infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the causative agent of AIDS.
- 2.If this occurs, treatment is available that can substantially reduce the risk of acquiring HIV infection. The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) recommends that for maximum protection, you should receive treatment within two hours of exposure.
- 3.The following are guidelines for what to do if you sustain a needlestick injury or body-fluid exposure.

### For Exposures During Normal Weekday Daytime Working Hours in the San Antonio Area

If the exposure occurs during working hours (8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.), care may be obtained from the [Student Health Center](#). However:

- To avoid delays in treatment, CALL before going to the [Student Health Center](#) to be sure it is open and that staff is present. Phone number is (210) 567-WELL (9355).
- If you are more than 30–45 minutes away from the [Student Health Center](#), we recommend that you seek care from the nearest emergency room or health care facility.
- If the [Student Health Center](#) is closed, go to the University Hospital Emergency Room. Contact the ER triage nurse at 358-2488 to expedite your care. Report to the [Student Health Center](#) on the next (non-holiday) weekday.
- If you are more than 30–45 minutes from the University Hospital Emergency Room, we recommend that you seek care from the nearest emergency room or health care facility. Report to the [Student Health Center](#) on the next (non-holiday) weekday.

### For Exposures After Normal Working Hours in the San Antonio Area

If the exposure occurs after working hours, care may be obtained from the University Hospital Emergency Room. Contact the ER triage nurse at 358-2488 to expedite your care. However:

- If you are more than 30–45 minutes away from the University Hospital Emergency Room, we recommend that you seek care from the nearest emergency room or health care facility. Report to the [Student Health Center](#) on the next (nonholiday) weekday following the exposure.
- If health care providers at another facility have questions about appropriate care, they can call the national HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Hot-Line for Clinicians at 1-888-HIV-4911, which is open 24 hours per day.

### **For Exposures Outside the San Antonio Area**

If the exposure occurs outside the San Antonio area, it is recommend that the student seek medical care from the nearest emergency room or health care facility. In **Harlingen**, during business hours, call 365-8752 for instructions. After hours, call 389-5004, VBMC Emergency Triage. For a medical emergency call 911.

- If health care providers at the facility have questions about appropriate care, they can call the national HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Hotline for Clinicians at 1-888-HIV-4911, which is open 24 hours per day.
- Contact the [Student Health Center](#) by phone at (210) 567-WELL (9355) on the next (nonholiday) weekday.

**4. Incident Reports.** Regardless of location, complete an incident report in the facility in which the incident occurred. The report should include information identifying the person whose body fluid was the source of exposure and a contact person at the institution for follow-up. Bring a copy of the incident report to the [Student Health Center](#).

**5. Cost.** If the above protocol is followed, cost of medical services received for needlestick or body-fluid exposure will be reimbursed by Health Science Center, up to \$500 per case. The reimbursement shall be processed by the [Student Health Center](#) after the student submits a medical insurance claim receipt for the same case with a completed incident report.

**6.** In order to be eligible to receive the Needlestick Policy benefit, each Health Science Center student must comply with the following requirements:

- a. Each student must consult the [Student Health Center](#) at (210) 567-WELL (9355) immediately.
- b. Each student must seek reimbursement from the student's private insurance company first. The student must initiate the request for reimbursement from Health Science Center within 30 days from the date the student's insurance claim is approved/denied.
- c. Each student must provide the [Student Health Center](#) with a written report of the incident prior to making any request for reimbursement which would include time, date, and location of incident. The incident must relate to your clinical duties as a registered student at the [Health Science Center](#).

7. These guidelines are subject to revision and modification by the Student Health Advisory Committee and the chief student affairs officer of Health Science Center and supersedes previous needlestick policies.

### **Recommendations of Student Health Advisory Committee Regarding Post Exposure Prophylaxis for Needlestick or Percutaneous Fluid Exposure**

1. For required courses, students should be sent only to locations where the individual schools (medicine, dental, nursing, health professions, and graduate school) have confirmed that resources are available to provide care in the event a student sustains an infectious exposure. Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for HIV, as recommended by the current CDC guidelines, should consist of medical counseling, lab work, and antiviral medications within the recommended time frame. These sites would need to be periodically reviewed to confirm that the appropriate policies and procedures are in effect, possibly as part of the annual affiliation agreements.

Departments will confirm that appropriate policies and procedures are in effect before students are sent to remote locations. This information will also be included in affiliation agreements.

For elective rotations in underserved areas, students will be notified that PEP may not be available as recommended by CDC guidelines. When possible, students will be given information as to the nearest facility where this level of care can be obtained. Administration may consider asking legal counsel to develop an informed consent/ release form to be signed by students acknowledging their understanding that PEP may not be immediately available to them on a chosen elective.

2. All Health Science Center students will be provided adequate education regarding universal precautions for infectious exposure and PEP procedures prior to any clinical rotations. Course directors/faculty must demonstrate that teaching and clinical application of the correct use of universal precautions occurs on clinical rotations.
3. Provide educational support to remote clinical sites, primarily in South Texas, to help bring their policies and procedures up to date regarding treatment of infectious exposures. The Health Science Center will cooperate in providing information to assist in making the needed drug therapy available at these remote sites.

Prior to the placement of a student in a preceptorship, the School of enrollment will by letter of agreement with the preceptor develop information regarding post-exposure prophylaxis, including the nearest facility where this level of care can be obtained. Students will be informed by letter of this same information. The School will inform the administrators of the preceptorship programs of the need for this information prior to student placement with a preceptor and will work with the administrators of the preceptorship program to identify the location of the nearest facility to each matched preceptor where the PEP can be obtained.

4. Continuation of current financial compensation for our students who follow our needlestick protocol and are treated after an injury in a remote location.

Students will follow procedures as outlined in the “Needlestick Policy,” which is given to each student at registration and available on the Web in the [UTHSCSA Catalog](#). Reimbursement will be for covered expenses.