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Preventing Transmission of Infectious Diseases in the Dental Clinic

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Bloodborne Pathogens Standard (see [29 CFR 1910.1030](#)) requires that all employees who may come in contact with blood be trained about proper infection control procedures (see 29 CFR 1910.1030 (g)(2)). Dentists in health centers and free clinics should be aware of current infection control practices and ensure all dental staff adhere to these practices at all times.

Dentists and staff in clinics that provide dental services can use the following checklist to ensure that they follow proper infection control practices at all times. Be certain that:

- All dental staff receive adequate training on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) infection control requirements. See CDC's [Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings](#).
- All dental staff are offered the hepatitis B series and any other work-related vaccines. Health centers and free clinics should have documented evidence of employee vaccines or refusal for vaccines in secured employee records. See CDC's [Immunizations Strongly Recommended for Health-Care Personnel \(HCP\)](#).
- All dental staff involved in patient care wear appropriate protective equipment such as arm-length protective gowns, gloves, masks, and eyewear. See CDC's [Personal Protective Equipment](#) site for dental providers.
- Patients are provided protective eyewear during dental procedures.
- Gloves are used for patient examinations and procedures, and are worn whenever skin could make contact with body fluids.
- Gloves are discarded after use with each patient or more often if their integrity is compromised.
- Hands are washed at the beginning of the day, before putting on gloves, and after taking off gloves or touching any potentially contaminated surface. See [Hand Hygiene Training Program](#).
- Disposable protective items such as gloves, masks, paper drapes, suction tips, saliva ejectors, and masks are used only once and discarded after each patient.

- Exposed clinical surfaces and equipment that cannot be moved, such as X-ray units and dental chairs, are either disinfected between patients or draped with protective covers, which are replaced after each patient.
- Sharps such as needles and scalpels are discarded in puncture resistant biohazard containers. See CDC's [Sharps Safety for Healthcare Settings](#).
- Disposable items saturated with blood are discarded in biohazard-labeled red bags and disposed of according to federal, state, and local regulations.
- Instruments used during dental procedures and bib clips are cleaned, packed, and sterilized before being used again. Sterilization methods include autoclave (steam under pressure), dry heat sterilizer, or chemical vapor, commonly known as chemiclave. See CDC's [Sterilization—Cleaning](#).
- Sterilizers are monitored utilizing mechanical, chemical, and biological indicators (BIs). BIs should be run at least weekly to ensure the sterilizer is effectively killing microorganisms. Results of BI tests must be maintained in a log book. See CDC's [Sterilization—Monitoring](#).
- The health center or free clinic maintains and updates infection control policies and procedures that include prevention of exposures and protocols for management of exposures.

For more information please refer to CDC guidelines and resources including [Infection Control in Dental Settings](#), the [One and Only Campaign](#), and [Universal Precautions for Preventing Transmission of Bloodborne Infections](#).

Want to learn more? The following FREE guidance articles are available from ECRI Institute: [Bloodborne Pathogen Standard](#), [Infection Control](#), [Minimizing Bloodborne Pathogen Exposures](#), and [Sharps Injury Prevention Programs](#). There are also Self-Assessment Questionnaires on [Bloodborne Pathogens](#) and [Preventing Sharps Injuries](#) located on the Clinical Risk Management Program website. All of these resources are provided FREE by ECRI Institute on behalf of HRSA. Don't have access or want to attend a free, live demonstration of the website? E-mail Clinical_RM_Program@ecri.org or call (610) 825-6000 ext. 5200.

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