



UTHealth Houston Employee and Medical Resident

Bloodborne Pathogen (BBP) Exposure: Needlesticks, Sharps Injuries & Exposures **Frequently Asked Questions**

Note: **If you are a UTHealth Houston student**, call the BBP Exposure Hotline at 713-500-OUCH (713-500-6824)

UT Health Services (UTHS) is the employee health provider for UTHealth Houston. Located at 6410 Fannin Suite 100, Houston, TX 77030. Appointments: 713-500-3267. **Hours: M-F 7:00 AM – 4:00 PM.** UTHS works in conjunction with Safety, Health, Environment & Risk Management (SHERM) to ensure that education, research, and healthcare service activities take place in conditions that are optimally safe and healthy for all students, faculty, and staff. [HOOP Policy 158](#) outlines the institutional Bloodborne Pathogen Control policy. The University has adopted the use of Universal/Standard Blood and Body Fluid Precautions and a [Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan](#).

Q: What should I do if I have a needlestick or other exposure?

A: UTHealth Houston has employees in many locations around the greater Houston area. Regardless of where the exposure occurs, **the first step is treatment.** Immediate treatment is provided to the healthcare worker at the site where the injury occurred. Immediate treatment consists of: 1. Clean the exposed area with soap and water for at least 15 minutes. OR 2. Flush mucous membranes with water or saline for at least 15 minutes. **The second step is to call UTHealth Houston Employee Health at 713-500-3267** (Monday through Friday, from 7 am to 4 pm). If after hours, call the **Needlestick Hotline at 1-800-770-9206.** Additional information is provided below and will guide you, depending upon where the initial exposure occurs.

Q: Where do I go for initial clinical management of a BBP exposure?

A: **When the injury occurs during regular clinic hours** (Monday through Friday, from 7 am to 4 pm), and regardless of the institution where the event occurred, the on-call Employee Health provider will advise you of your options. You may be asked to visit UTHS Clinic, or we may be able to offer you a telehealth visit. **Telehealth care will be dependent upon the type of injury or exposure sustained.**

When the injury occurs outside regular clinic hours, call the Employee Health Needlestick Hotline at 1-800-770-9206 to discuss the next steps with the on-call provider. Depending on the risk, you may be advised to proceed to the Emergency Department (ED) for further assessment and initiation of PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) or, in the event of a low-risk exposure, to wait until the following morning and then go to UTHS Clinic. Please plan for a total possible service time of 1-2 hours. Each location has different procedures. See the specifics below:

Memorial-Hermann Exposure: Go to the Memorial-Hermann Emergency Department for further evaluation and possible initiation of PEP. Inform the ED staff that you are a UTHealth Houston medical resident or employee and explain why you are there. Please show your badge. You should be fast-tracked, so don't hesitate to make this known to the ED staff.

LBJ Exposure: Report the injury to the unit supervisor/hospital supervisor and go to the LBJ Emergency Department for further evaluation and possible initiation of PEP. Inform the ED staff that you are a UTHealth Houston medical resident or employee and explain why you are there. Please show your badge. You should be fast-tracked, so don't hesitate to make this known to the ED staff.

A UT Physicians (UTP) Clinic: Call the Employee Health Needlestick Hotline at 1-800-770-9206. There are about 136 UTP clinics in our area. If you have an exposure in one of these clinics, locate the Nurse Manager of the clinic to ensure the source patient has their blood drawn. Each clinic has a source patient kit for these situations. If there

is ever a question about the procedure, the clinic may call UTHS at 713-500-3267. **Note:** You will be directed to come to the UTHS Clinic for initiation of tracking and treatment of a BBP Exposure.

Q: Where do I go for subsequent clinical management of a BBP exposure?

A: Your follow-up appointment will be scheduled at UTHS. Located at 6410 Fannin Suite 100, Houston, TX 77030. Appointments: 713-500-3267. Hours: M-F 7:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Telehealth appointments may be available.

Q: Why does a message have to be left when calling the Needlestick Hotline?

A: The Employee Health Needlestick Hotline is staffed by a 24-hour answering service that routes calls to the on-call provider. If the provider on call does not respond within 30 minutes, the backup provider is contacted by the answering service. Always call the Needlestick Hotline first and as soon as possible after the injury occurs (i.e., don't wait until the end of the day).

Q: Who is responsible for testing the source patient?

A: The institution or clinic where the injury occurred (e.g., Memorial Hermann, LBJ Hospital, or UTP) is responsible for obtaining the blood sample on the source patient. Placing orders outside the process may result in the source patient and/or the resident receiving a bill. It also makes obtaining source patient results difficult (sometimes impossible). The injury site is responsible for sending results to the UTHS clinic.

Q: Who is responsible for assisting a UTHealth Houston medical resident or employee?

A: UTHS is responsible for ushering the UTHealth Houston medical resident or employee through the initial and follow-up process. It is the role of the UTHS to communicate with the institution where the injury occurred to ensure the source patient is tested.

Q: Why do I have to fill out the [online form](#) for a BBP exposure?

A: Per HOOP 86 (Medical Emergencies, Minor Injuries/Illnesses), all workplace injuries, exposures, and illnesses that occur at UTHealth Houston with employees, medical residents, or students must be reported via the [Supervisor's First Report of Injury form](#). It is important to understand that this form has two functions: 1) to protect you and your rights, including ensuring that you are not inappropriately billed, and 2) to keep a paper trail for UTHealth workers' compensation insurance and risk management. Copies of this report will go to you, your supervisors, Risk Management, and UTHS. They are stored in a HIPAA-compliant electronic format.

Q: Why did I receive a bill from the Memorial Herman Hospital or another partner entity?

A: If you are a UTHealth Houston medical resident or employee and have followed the above steps (including completing the Supervisors' First Report of Injury), you should not be billed for a work-related injury. If you receive a bill, contact Sondra Faul at Sondra.K.Faul@uth.tmc.edu. Note that non-employed trainees (i.e., military-paid), will be billed if they go to the Memorial-Hermann ED. Military-paid trainees have a process to contact their military supervisor. UTHS clinic is contracted as in network with some Tri-Care plans.

Q: What if my BBP exposures happens on a 3 day weekend and source patient results are not available?

A: Three-day weekends can be difficult – please know that UTHS cannot speed up the process of getting source patient results. If you are concerned, PEP can be prescribed. The on-call provider will order the medication and instruct you on how to take it and its side effects. The employee will need to go to the pharmacy to fill the Rx.

Q: May I receive the source patient or my laboratory results via telephone or telehealth?

A: Some statutes dictate counseling around the disclosure of HIV results. We can disclose results in a non-face-to-face encounter. If your results are positive, we will ensure you are given an "immediate opportunity for individual, face-to-face post-test counseling".