

Using Universal Precautions in Midwifery Care

What are Universal Precautions?

Universal precautions, also known as standard precautions are intended to aid in prevention of parenteral, mucous membrane, and nonintact skin exposure of health-care providers and clients to bloodborne pathogens. The use of Universal precautions is a matter of public health and safety. These precautions are implemented to protect both health care providers and clients. (CDC 2021):

1. Hand hygiene
2. Proper use of personal protective equipment
 - Gloves, gowns, masks, aprons
3. Proper use of injections
4. Safe handling of equipment, surfaces, and client environment, including laundry and birth tools.
5. Proper respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
6. Midwifery specific rules and regulations

1. Hand Hygiene:

A. Components of hand Hygiene

- I. Wash for at least 30 seconds with warm soapy water.
- II. Hand washing is essential after coming into contact with any bodily fluids.
- III. Hand washing must be done if hands are: visibly dirty, before putting on gloves, after removing gloves and completing a 'dirty procedure' (any procedure that the hands have become contaminated or soiled).
- IV. Fingernails need to be kept short.
- V. Cuticles must be intact.
- VI. Avoid nail polish
- VII. Hand Sanitizer is an appropriate alternative if running water is not accessible, hand sanitizer must be at least 70% alcohol. (CDC 2021).

2. Proper use of personal protective equipment:

B. Components to PPE

- I. Proper PPE should be worn during situations involving possible contact with bodily fluids and/or non-intact skin.
- II. PPE including face shields should be worn during procedures where a splash of fluids is anticipated.
- III. All single use items should be disposed of after use, including PPV (OSHA n.d).

3. Injections:

C. Injections Safety and Sharps

- I. Injection site should be properly cleaned with 70%+ proof alcohol.
- II. All used needles should be discarded **immediately** after use in a sharps container.
- III. Gloves should be available for staff while giving an injection, but not required. (CDC 2012).

- IV. Use a filter needle when drawing up from a glass ampule.
4. Safe handling of equipment:

D. Environmental Cleaning, In all Midwifery situations.

- I. Identify if the item needs to be cleaned, sanitized or sterilized.

Cleaned: (low level disinfection)

- 1. Noncritical items:
 - Stethoscope, BP Cuff, Fetoscope, and other items that have had no direct contact with bodily fluids.
- 2. Large clinic items that have not come into contact with bodily fluids.
- 3. All items used need to be cleaned after every single use.

Sanitized: (High level disinfection)

- 4. Critical items that come in contact with bodily fluids, open skin, blood.
- 5. Items that can be wiped down with a sanitizing agent such as bleach water, peroxide for blood stains, or cavi wipes.
- 6. Laundry must be sanitized with hot water, oxiclean, peroxide, bleach and laundry detergent.

Sterilized: (Highest level of disinfection)

- 1. All birth and suture tools must first be soaked in an enzyme cleaner, scrubbed and then autoclaved. See autoclave for proper use and care.

5. Proper respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette

E. Respiratory hygiene and COVID protocol.

- I. Per the health department, masks should be worn at all times.
- II. Any cold or flu-like symptoms require staff to stay home
- III. Any COVID positive staff must quarantine for five (5) days after symptoms.

6. Midwifery specific rules and regulations

F. Use of Tubs for Births:

- I. Tub should be sanitized before and after use.
- II. A new liner should be used for each birth.
- III. Long elbow length gloves should be used.
- IV. A new hose should be used for filling and draining water at each birth (Delaney 2022).
- V. Universal precautions should be used and maintained while managing labor and birth.

F. Placenta management:

- I. Gloves should always be worn while handling placentas.
- II. Placentas should be double bagged, and placed in a biohazard bag for large scale birth volume (Delaney 2022).
- III. Placentas may be disposed of through local hospital services if prearranged.
- IV. Placentas should never be thrown into trash.

OSHA Requirements:

- I. Severe incidents and fatalities need to be reported to OSHA within specific time parameters. Fatalities need to be reported within 8 hours, and severe incidents reported within 24 hours. (OSHA n.d)
- II. Call the OSHA 24-hour hotline at 1-800-321-6742 (OSHA) to file a report.

References:

Centers for Disease Control (2012). Injection Safety Guidelines.

<https://www.cdc.gov/injectionsafety/index.html>

Personal Protective Equipment. OSHA (n.d.) Retrieved March 5 2022 from

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When and How to Wash Your Hands. Centers for Disease Control (2021, August 10). Retrieved March 5 2022 from, <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>