

CITY OF TSHWANE METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

POLICY ON THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATION RELATED HIV AND HEPATITIS B EXPOSURE

INTRODUCTION

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993) places a duty on the employer to inform the employee of risks in the workplace and to maintain a healthy and safe workplace. The employer must therefore prevent occupational injuries and diseases as far as reasonably practical. A person can contract HIV and/or Hepatitis B when he/she comes into contact with blood and other body fluids. Contact is mainly through broken skin, e.g. scratches, lacerations and puncture wounds, or mucous membranes, e.g. the inside of the mouth and eyelids. Needle stick injuries are by far the commonest form of occupation related HIV exposure. HIV and Hepatitis B are not listed as compensationable diseases in Schedule 3 of the Compensation of Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (Act 130 of 93) and are not presumed to have arisen out of and in the course of employment. Proof thereof lies with the employee.

CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYEES EXPOSED TO HIV AND HEPATITIS B

Certain categories of employees could be exposed to blood and other body fluids in the course of performing their normal duties.

These categories include:

- Health Care Workers
- Emergency Services Personnel (Fire/Ambulance personnel)
- Metro Police Officers
- First Aiders
- Cleaners in Health Care Facilities
- Workers performing waste disposal

Occasionally other employees could become victims of assault, hijackings, etc whilst performing normal duties and could then be exposed to blood and other body fluids.

PREVENTION OF OCCUPATION RELATED HIV AND HEPATITIS B

1. The Employer will establish the risk of employees of contracting HIV and Hepatitis B in their workplaces.
2. Employees will be informed of the risks of contracting HIV and Hepatitis B in their work places.
3. Safe working procedures will be compiled and updated by the relevant departments and employees will be accordingly informed.
4. The Employer will ensure strict adherence to safe working procedures.
5. Universal precautions should always be practiced.
6. Employers will provide the necessary Personal Protective Equipment in accordance with the identified risk. Personal Protective Equipment must always be worn as indicated and employee must not perform identified tasks without it.
7. Employee with a risk of exposure to Hepatitis B should be vaccinated against Hepatitis B and should receive a booster every five years.
8. The relevant Department should report all incidents of possible occupational exposure to HIV and Hepatitis B in the prescribed manner, as an injury on duty.
9. Occupational Health and the relevant Department will investigate all incidents and the relevant Department must implement corrective actions as necessary.

MANAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES EXPOSED TO BLOOD OR OTHER BODY FLUIDS

1. Employees exposed to blood and other body fluids through broken skin or mucous membranes should immediately, or preferably within one hour, report to the designated Occupational Health Clinic. They should not continue normal work or complete their shift, except in case of emergencies. After clinic hours an after hour contact person will be available.
2. Pre-test counselling will be done and informed consent will be obtained before HIV and Hepatitis B antigen and antibody testing.
3. Every effort should be made to establish the HIV and Hepatitis B status of the source. Should the source refuse or not be available, the employee should submit a signed statement to that effect to his/her supervisor.
4. Post-test counselling will be done after receiving the laboratory results.
5. Depending on blood results and risk of infection the appropriate prophylactic treatment will be determined. Prophylactic treatment will be in line with the latest nationally accepted prophylactic guidelines and regularly updated.
6. Exposed employees will be fully informed on further case management, including risk of infection, side effects and toxicity of prophylactic treatment and follow up blood tests.
7. Employees will have a choice of accepting the offered prophylactic treatment or not and must indicate their choice in writing.
8. The employer (Occupational Health) is responsible for all costs concerning blood tests and prophylactic treatment.
9. Strict confidentiality shall be maintained regarding information of employee and source test results.
10. Should an employee contract occupation related HIV or Hepatitis B the case will be reported to the Compensation Commissioner for consideration and decision. Until the Compensation Commissioner has approved the claim the employee is legally responsible for all treatment costs. (Excluding cost mentioned in 8) Re-imburement of costs will be done once a claim has been approved.
11. To ensure effective case management employees must strictly adhere to the instructions of Occupational Health e.g. follow-up evaluations.