



Policy: Accidental Exposure Protocol

Approved By: MDCM Program Committee

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Purpose: Procedure for Accidental Exposure to Body Fluids

Policy

Procedure for Accidental Exposure to Body Fluids

Percutaneous exposure to body substances by a needle stick injury, a laceration, or a splash on mucous membranes or non-intact skin has the potential to transmit blood-borne pathogens to the exposed individual. The transmissions of major concern are hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV), and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Should an accidental exposure occur, medical students are insured by the Commission des Normes de l'équité de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) for injuries sustained while completing credited clinical rotations, in and outside of Quebec.

It is important that you understand the risk of an exposure:

- HBV has a sero-conversion rate of approximately 30% in non-immune individuals. **All medical students should be vaccinated upon entry into medical school** or be known to have natural immunity.
- HCV has a sero-conversion rate of approximately 3%.
- HIV has a sero-conversion rate of approximately 0.3%. Immediate treatment with anti-viral therapy has been shown to reduce the incidence of disease, especially if administered **within the first hour** of exposure and for four weeks thereafter. If the contact was with a patient who is considered low risk for HIV, the student may not be offered anti-retrovirals. Students must have their risk objectively assessed. **All emergency rooms are equipped with post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kits.**

It is your supervisor's responsibility to ensure that you receive post-exposure care at your training site, or the nearest emergency room as soon as possible. Do not delay going to the emergency room if your supervisor is unavailable. It is equally important that you know where to go for assistance in accessing post-exposure risk assessment and care, and in completing incident reports. **Under no circumstances should you remain silent or fail to seek medical attention.**

Where did accidental exposure occur?

At a McGill teaching hospital

Immediately inform your supervisor, the Head/Charge Nurse, and Occupational Health Services. Go directly to the ER and inform the triage nurse that you are a medical student who has had an exposure to body fluids.

At a community placement (e.g., CLSC or rural setting)

Immediately inform your supervisor and go directly to the ER and inform the triage nurse that you are a medical student who has had an exposure to body fluids.

At an away rotation/elective

Immediately inform your supervisor who will assist you with the host institutions' policy. If in doubt, go directly to the nearest ER and inform the triage nurse that you are a medical student who has had an exposure to body fluids.

**Complete the online incident report form,
please use the Associate Dean UGME's name as the supervisor**

[Incident Report Form](#)

Within 24 hours, contact and follow-up with the

[Associate Dean, UGME](#)

All incidents, including accidental exposure to body fluids, must be reported to the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education for two reasons: 1) it is important for an authority at McGill is aware of your situation in the event any follow-up is required and 2) because these incidents occur in the

clinical setting, and you are healthcare professionals, you may have to abide by [SERTIH Protocol](#). For more information, please consult the [Blood-borne Viral Infections Policy](#).

In addition, following an incident, you must complete the online [Accident & Incident Reporting Form](#) located on the McGill University Environmental Health and Safety website.

Your experience will be handled confidentially, and only those individuals who must be informed of the incident are notified. Typically, these individuals are the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education, McGill University Environmental Health and Safety, and the Student Affairs Officer.

NB. If the incident occurred in a hospital, there may be additional incident forms to complete.

The Faculty's online incident report form is to be completed within **24 hours** of the exposure to ensure that the appropriate steps have been taken, to provide financial assistance for medication (if necessary), and to offer you counselling. A needle-stick or other exposure is a frightening and anxiety-provoking experience, and may result in feeling alone, ashamed, or embarrassed. [The Office of Medical Learner Affairs](#) can assist you in dealing with these feelings.

Health and Safety Hospital Contact Information:

Please find a complete list of the [Occupational Health and Safety Offices](#) of our clinical partners on our UGME website.

