Accident procedures – glass, sharps or splashes from substances with an infection risk

Accident procedures

First Aid measures

First aid will likely be required and where there is potential exposure to infectious material it is important to seek medical advice on any additional measures that may be necessary.

Injury:

In the event of sustaining an accident resulting in a wound:

- Immediately wash the wound liberally with soap and water but without scrubbing.
- Gently encourage free bleeding of puncture wounds but do not suck the wound.
- Dry the area and apply a waterproof dressing.
- Do not use antiseptics and skin washes - there is no evidence of their efficacy, and their effect on local defences is unknown.

Splash:

In the event of contaminating skin, conjunctivae or mucous membranes:

- Immediately irrigate the area copiously with water.
- In the case of eye contamination, irrigate both before and after removing any contact lenses.

Medical attention:

- Attend the Accident and Emergency Department of the local hospital if injury requires medical attention.

Additional priority actions:

In the event of any accident where exposure to a **pathogen, genetically modified micro-organism or potentially infectious material** may have occurred (including when this is unknown):

- Identify the possible infection risk and retain any items involved in the accident. Tracing the source of any infectious or potentially infectious material will enable an informed assessment of the risk of infection to be made and may be key to deciding on prophylactic treatment etc.

- It is important that medical personnel assess the need for any prophylactic treatment or health surveillance on a case by case basis. Contact the Accident and Emergency Department of the local hospital to assess the requirement for any treatment or need to take blood for storage.
- Ensure the injured person takes a copy of any safety data sheet as well as risk assessments with them to the A&E Department.
- Ensure the staff member tells the A&E Department staff they are from the University of Edinburgh and **do not** have an onsite Occupation Health Department who can undertake any treatment or take bloods for storage.
    - University OH Service cannot see any staff or students with an injury as they are not a treatment service.
    - Ensure that staff and students are aware to attend A&E and not University OH Service as that can delay necessary treatment.
- It may be necessary for A&E to refer the injured person to the Chalmers Sexual Health Centre as this centre specialises in blood borne viruses and treatment, regardless of how the virus was transmitted. Their website, including contact details, is **http://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot.nhs.uk/** and the following pdfs may also be of use:
    - **Needlestick Injuries Prevention of HIV Infection A Factsheet for Patients.pdf** (nhslothian.scot)
    - **https://policyonline.nhslothian.scot/Policies/PatientInformation/Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Antiretroviral Starter Pack.pdf**
    - **https://policyonline.nhslothian.scot/Policies/PatientInformation/Testing for Blood Borne Viruses.pdf**
- Particular care should be taken to ensure that others in the laboratory do not help with the clear up of accidental spillage (especially where there has been an accident that involves broken glass) if they are not aware of the potential risks and trained in safe working practices.
- It may be appropriate to refer staff or students to the University Counselling Services, this should be decided on a case by case basis by the manager/supervisor of the injured person (**http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/human-resources/about/staff-counselling** and **http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling**)

Reporting

Needlestick and sharps injuries and splashes from substances with a risk of infection are potentially very serious and must always be reported, recorded and followed up.

All injuries that carry a risk of work-related infection should be notified promptly to the University Health and Safety Department using the online system at

www.accidents.is.ed.ac.uk, as well as to your supervisor and/or the School/Area Safety Adviser.

In the event of any accident where exposure to a **pathogen or genetically modified** microorganism may have occurred:

- Alert the University Biosafety Unit as soon as possible - it may be necessary to report any such incident promptly to the authorities.
- We are available directly on MS TEAMS by video chat or direct chat messages which may be the quicker way to contact us than telephone, although you can also call 51 4245.

Investigation

All accidents and incidents that do occur should subsequently be reviewed by the individual(s) involved in conjunction with their immediate supervisor and School/Area Safety Adviser:

- Establish the cause of the accident or incident and identify what should be done to prevent any recurrence.
- The source of any infection risk (specimen, sample, material etc.) should be clearly identified and retained and tested (if appropriate).
- Prepare a full accident report and forward to the Health and Safety Department as soon as possible.
- Accidents and incidents should also be monitored and reviewed at School level to identify any improvements that are necessary. However, care must be undertaken to protect the confidentiality of individuals involved in particular accidents.
- Any remedial action identified must be implemented and any lessons learnt should be communicated widely within the School to others who may benefit from the information

Accident procedures are described in detail above and summarised in the **Accident Procedures flow chart**. A copy of the flow chart should be displayed in all areas where infectious or potentially infectious materials are handled.

Where required, further advice can be obtained from the University Biological Safety Adviser (**biosafety@ed.ac.uk**).