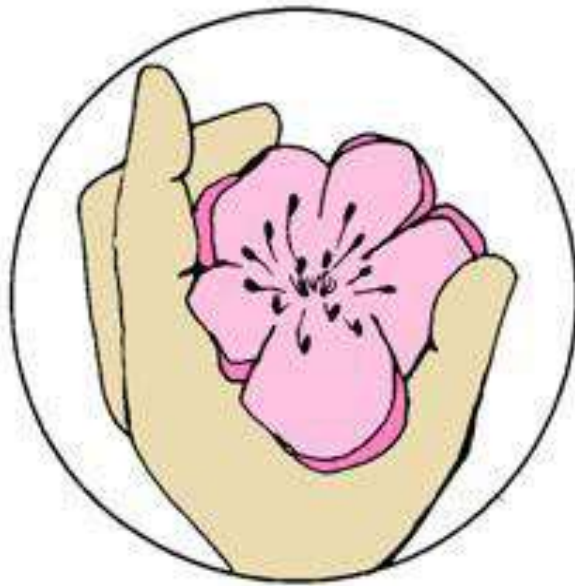


# Calgary Progressive Lifestyles Foundation



## Universal Precautions Best Practices

Everyone deserves respect regardless of their diagnosis, disability or whatever challenges they're facing.

Universal precautions or routine practices are used to reduce the risk of disease transmission from one person to another.

Remember all clients, every coworker and each one of us is entitled to respect, dignity and safety. This is true whether our health status is known or unknown.

When it comes to concerns about disease transmission, approaches called universal precautions are used. These kinds of approaches are also sometimes known as routine practices.

Under universal precautions, all bodily fluid and biological wastes are considered infectious, no matter what.

There is one standard way of dealing with things like blood and urine.

Universal precautions are used with all clients/patients/residents during all care to prevent the spread of infections such as HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.

Using a separate approach with a certain client or co-worker because we happen to know him/her health status is discriminatory. It is a violation of human rights. It also increases the risk of spreading infection, since we cannot possibly know all the details of everyone's health. And they can't know everything about us. Keep in mind that roughly a third of the people who are HIV positive do not know their own status yet. Using universal precautions at the place of work means doing all of the following, all of the time:

- Cover your cuts – If you have cuts or open sores on your skin, cover them with a plastic bandage.
- Wear gloves – If there is any risk of coming into contact with blood or other bodily fluids – including items that might contain these fluids – wear latex gloves. Gloves should be used only once and then thrown away in a plastic bag.
- Wash your hands – Wash your hands with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds:
  - a.) After you have come into contact with blood or other bodily fluids
  - b.) After you have gone to the bathroom after you have removed latex gloves
  - c.) Before you prepare food
- Use hand lotion to keep your hands from becoming chapped, irritated or cut because unbroken skin is a great defense against infection!
- Clean up – Spilled blood or other body fluids should be cleaned up with a fresh mixture of household bleach (1 part) and water (9 parts). Paper towels should be used and thrown away in a plastic garbage bag. Please note that that bleach will not kill Hepatitis C.

- Discard garbage – Use caution when getting rid of garbage and other waste that may contain infected materials or used needles. Throw away any material soiled with blood or other body fluids in a sealed plastic bag, using gloves if you have to handle the material.
- Needles – Use gloves to place in designated sharps container (recommended). If you do not have access to a sharps container, you can always improvise by using a hard plastic container with a cover. Mark the outside of the container with a clear warning. Do not attempt to recap the needle. Place needle(s) inside and store in a safe location. Container(s) can be dropped off at most neighborhood pharmacies or public health units.
- Bites – If you have been bitten by anyone, please check with your health-care provider. You may need to have a tetanus shot.
- Wash clothes, towels, and bedding – Items soiled with bodily fluids or blood should be stored in sealed plastic bags. Just before washing, remove the items using gloves, and wash separately in hot soapy water. Dry in a hot dryer. Dry-cleaning is another option.

Following universal precautions means that every client is treated the same. Everyone feels more welcome, and is better cared for. It means that safety is a priority, all of the time. With a clear and steady approach, clients, staff, volunteers, participants and visitors can relax. Make sure your work place has a ready supply of plastic bandages, latex gloves, soap, hand lotion, bleach, water, paper towels, plastic garbage bags, safe containers for sharp objects, sealing plastic bags. Bleach is useful and affordable. Making it available is a simple addition to your first aid kit and cleaning supplies. Getting used to having universal precautions as part of the routine takes a bit of practice. But this approach goes a long way in taking care of everybody's health and well-being.