



# Standard of Practice: Bloodborne Viruses (2021)

A **Standard of Practice** is the minimum standard of professional behavior and ethical conduct expected by the College on a specific issue.

## Preamble

This Standard of Practice is intended to minimize the risk of exposure to bloodborne viruses for both patients and physicians during the provision of medical care.

## Definitions

**Bloodborne Viruses (BBV):** for the purposes of this document, BBV includes: hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

**Exposure Prone Procedures:** invasive procedures where there is a higher than average risk that injury to the physician may result from the exposure of the patient's open tissues to the blood or body fluid of the physician. A further description of what procedures may be considered exposure-prone can be found in the Public Health Agency of Canada's *Guideline on the Prevention and Transmission of Bloodborne Viruses from Infected Healthcare Workers in Healthcare Settings* (as amended).

**Physician:** for the purpose of this document, includes all licensed medical practitioners and, also, individuals registered on the College's Education Register.

**Routine Practices and Additional Precautions:** a set of practices and precautions designed to protect healthcare professionals and patients from infection caused by a broad range of infectious agents, including BBV.

## **Standard of Practice**

### **Safeguarding Health**

All physicians must be familiar with and adhere to the routine practices and additional precautions outlined in the Public Health Agency of Canada's guideline: *Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings* (as amended).

It is strongly recommended that all practising physicians be immunized against HBV, unless a contraindication exists, or there is evidence of prior immunity. This recommendation is for the protection of both physicians and their patients. Physicians who do not have immunity against HBV should seek expert advice on alternative measures to be taken to prevent infection with HBV.

### **Knowing Serological Status**

All physicians have an ethical obligation to know their serological status for BBV.

Physicians who perform or assist in the performance of exposure prone procedures have an ethical obligation to be tested for BBV at the frequency recommended by a physician who is familiar with the treatment of BBV, taking into consideration physicians' personal at-risk behaviors and potential exposures.

Physicians who are involved in an exposure event, such as a needle stick injury or other exposure, must seek appropriate expert advice regarding the nature and frequency of testing that is required to determine if they or others have been infected with a BBV.

### **Reporting Positive Serological Status**

Physicians who are seropositive for a BBV and perform or assist in exposure prone procedures must:

1. notify the Quality Assurance Committee of the College as soon as possible after learning of their serological status; and
2. undergo testing for BBV in accordance with the recommendations of an appropriate medical advisor(s) chosen by the Quality Assurance Committee of the College.

### **Precautions in Practice**

Physicians who are seropositive for a BBV must take all reasonable precautions to minimize the risk of exposure to patients, including being familiar with and adhering to the Public Health Agency of Canada's guideline: *Guideline on the Prevention and Transmission of Bloodborne Viruses from Infected Healthcare Workers in Healthcare Settings* (as amended).

## Acknowledgements

CPSBC (2019). Practice Standard. Blood-borne Viruses in Registrants  
CPSM (2019). Standards of Practice of Medicine. Schedule J. Bloodborne Pathogens

## References

Public Health Agency of Canada (2016). Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings.

Public Health Agency of Canada (2019). Guideline on the Prevention of Transmission of Bloodborne Viruses from Infected Healthcare Workers in Healthcare Settings.

Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada (2016). Framework on Blood Borne Pathogens.

## Document History

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