

SD - Infection Control

Policy

As part of Headway Gippsland Inc.'s duty of care to participants, employees, volunteers and the general public, we will ensure people are made aware of the procedures we have in place to minimise the risks to all people of exposure to, and transmission of, infection and infectious diseases.

Headway Gippsland Inc. provides a range of support services to people living with disability, and as a generalisation, this group are often more susceptible to infections and the impacts of subsequent disease. It is therefore important we remain vigilant in our commitment to the use of standard, extra precautions when required, in all areas of service delivery.

Infectious diseases (also known as communicable diseases) are caused by organisms, often called 'germs', such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites. While some organisms are vitally important in keeping us healthy, others can cause disease and harm.

Infectious diseases include things like colds and flu, gastroenteritis, measles, hepatitis and coronavirus, and can be spread directly or indirectly from one person to another. It is important to know that infections can be present with, or without visible signs of disease, or symptoms.

A person may be infectious:

- Before they become unwell (the incubation period)
- During an illness
- After the 'acute' illness has passed some infections can become chronic and the person remains infectious

It is important to always assume that everyone we interact with is potentially infectious and maintain good hand and general hygiene practices and use personal protective equipment when appropriate.

Procedure

Standard or universal precautions are guidelines designed to prevent or reduce the transmission of infectious organisms.

Employees working in any care establishment have a duty of care, to take all reasonable steps to safeguard participants, other staff and members of the public from harm and this includes the spread of infection.

All staff who are unwell and think they may have an infectious disease are required to stay away from work until such time as they are cleared by their doctor before returning to work.

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A doctor's certificate is required after 2 or more days absence from work and must be presented with the timesheet for payment of sick days (normally only eligible permanent employees are paid for sick leave), see Leave Entitlement policy for further information.

Standard Or Universal Precautions

Standard precautions are infection prevention practices always used in care and support settings.

The precautions include:

- Perform hand hygiene, before and after every episode of contact with another resident/participant
- Safely use and dispose of sharps
- Routinely clean the environment as well as clean and sanitise re-usable equipment;
- Conduct and encourage respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
- Avoid touching where possible when there is a risk of spreading disease
- Managing waste and linen appropriately
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) when in contact with blood and body fluids (secretions and excretions excluding sweat) or if the staff member has a break in their skin. Skin is a natural barrier to the spread of infection.

Sometimes extra precautions may be put in to place when a participant is known to have an infection or is particularly vulnerable, for example the person is immunosuppressed or receiving treatment for cancer or another disease.

- Contact, airborne and droplet precautions are additional precautions that may be required when caring for participants with symptoms of a respiratory illness such as flu or a suspected or confirmed COVID-19, or who have been diagnosed with a condition like MRSA.
- All staff must remember to also use standard precautions in addition to the extra precautions described below. Perform hand hygiene before and after every contact with a participant.
- Contact and droplet precautions include:
 - Use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
 - Donning (putting on) gloves, surgical masks, and gown and may include protective eyewear.
 - If PPE is required, then staff must use new PPE for each episode of personal care:

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- Do not re-use the same gown, surgical mask, eye protection*, or gloves for the same participant at a later time. NOTE: * Eye protection may be re-used if appropriately cleaned between uses.
- Do not re-use any PPE for different participants (even if these participants are in the same house).
- Extra COVID-19 procedures are described separately see Infection Control – COVID 19 policy.

Routine Cleaning

Standard precautions must be implemented when cleaning surfaces in participants homes, shared group venues or facilities and vehicles.

Keeping environmental surfaces clean plays an important role in the transmission of infections, and regular cleaning is necessary to maintain a safe environment.

Surfaces should be cleaned on a regular basis using cleaning procedures that minimise dispersal of micro-organisms into the air, for example using a damp or micro-fibre cloth for dusting.

Floors should be cleaned daily or as necessary with a vacuum cleaner. Alternatively, damp dusting or cleaning with a dust-retaining mop is acceptable.

During cleaning activities employees must wear:

- Suitable gloves and other protective clothing appropriate for the task such as re-usable or disposable aprons.
- Protective eyewear can also be worn where splashing is likely to occur.

Routine surface cleaning should proceed as follows:

- Clean and dry work surfaces before and after usage or when visibly soiled.
- Spills should be dealt with immediately - if the spill involves blood or bodily fluids refer to further details below.
- Use soap or detergent and warm water for routine cleaning; the use of disinfectants and 'anti-bacterial' products are not necessary as a routine and only use products labelled as 'anti-bacterial' when some-one has a diagnosed bacterial infection. The overuse of anti-bacterial products is resulting in an increase in bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics.
 - Remember, viruses cause diseases such as the colds, flu and COVID-19 so anti-bacterial products are not effective - use soap and water or alcohol-based cleaning products.
- Where extra precautions are in place, in addition to soap and water, disinfectants can be used. Always use these products in accordance with manufacturer instructions and

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ensure you have adequate ventilation (again you just need a product labelled 'disinfectant, no need for anti-bacterial unless the person has a bacterial infection).

- Empty buckets after use, wash with detergent and warm water and store dry.
- Re-usable clothes should be washed using a hot wash cycle and dried in the sun where possible.
- Mops should be cleaned in detergent and warm water then stored dry.
- Toilets, sinks, washbasins, tables, and surrounding areas should be cleaned regularly or as required.
- Cleaning methods for these items should avoid generation of aerosols.
 - NOTE: there is a big difference between antiseptics and disinfectants. An antiseptic is applied to the body, while disinfectants are applied to nonliving surfaces, such as countertops and handrails.

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/antibacterial-cleaning-products>

Blood & Other Body Fluids

As previously discussed, it is impossible to know if a person (employee, participant or family) is carrying any infectious disease. This includes blood borne (or other bodily fluid) diseases such as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis - B and C and Cruetzfeld-Jakob Disease (CJD).

Standard precautions must be implemented in all situations where there is risk of exposure to blood and/or bodily fluids. NOTE: Bodily fluids includes vomit, urine, faeces, sweat, saliva, mucous and semen.

The following routes can result in exposure to blood and other bodily fluids:

- Parental (e.g., any puncture or needle stick injury of the skin surface).
- Mucous membrane (e.g., splash of blood or bodily fluids into the mouth).
- Conjunctival (e.g., splash of blood or bodily fluids into the eye).
- Direct contact with 'non-intact skin' (e.g., non-intact skin is any situation where a person has a cut, scratch, other sore or abrasions on their hands or other parts of the body).

Employees must take the following standard and extra precautions where there is a risk of exposure to blood and bodily fluids:

- Employees should always wash hands and wear gloves when undertaking any tasks that may require contact with blood or bodily fluids.
- Sometimes other protective equipment such as disposable aprons, face masks/shields or eye protection can be worn though this level of protection is not normally used during routine personal care tasks.
- Employees should use general-purpose gloves when undertaking such tasks as handling chemical disinfectants or when undertaking decontamination procedures.

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- Hands should be washed with soap and water, before putting gloves on and after taking gloves off, and gloves must be changed between tasks.
- Wash hands using a thorough cleansing action, covering all surfaces.
- An alcoholic hand rub may be used in emergency situations or when hand-washing facilities are limited or are not available.
- Hands can be protected from chafing through the regular use of a moisturising cream.
- Inspect the skin for any abrasions or breaks prior to commencing duty/work and cover cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing.
- Individuals with dermatitis or weeping lesions on their hands should seek advice from their manager.
- Hands or other skin surfaces, which become contaminated with blood or body substances, must be washed immediately with soap and running water.
- If there is an incident and you or another person are exposed to blood or bodily fluids, e.g., needle stick injury or splash of urine in to the mouth or eye:
 - immediately wash or rinse the area with running water for about 10 minutes.
 - place a clean dressing over the puncture wound if you suffer a needle stick injury - do not squeeze the wound to try and make it bleed as this can increase the risk of infections.
 - report the incident to your manager as soon as practicable and attend your GP or emergency department for medical review and assessment.
- Clothing contaminated with blood or body substances should be removed as soon as practicable and before workers meet other participants.
- Masks must be worn where there is a likelihood of splashing of blood or other body substances.
- Masks should be removed as soon as practicable.
- Masks should be removed by touching the strings/loops only.
- Protective eyewear must be worn where there is likelihood of splashing or splattering of blood or body substances.
- Eye wear must be optically clear, anti-fog and distortion free, close fitting and disposable or reusable after cleaning and disinfection.
- Minimise the potential for blood or substance spills through being alert and following guidelines recommended.

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Spill Cleaning Process

Spills should be cleared up before the area is then cleaned - adding cleaning liquids to spills increases the size of the spill.

Spill:

- Wherever possible, isolate the area contaminated by the blood or body fluid spill.
- Minimise access area to where spill has occurred to prevent further contamination.
- Gather cleaning and rubbish disposal equipment so it is close by, you don't want to be carrying contaminated materials around the area.
- Wear gloves and eye protection (if eye protection is not available cover your eyes with your glasses).
- Apply absorbent paper to soak up the spill and dispose of this into your bin lined with a double plastic bag:
 - Cover the area with a freshly prepared mixture of detergent and cold water.
 - Wipe the area from the outside to the inside of the spill with the detergent and cold water.
 - Dry the area to ensure it is not slippery.
 - Now the area is clean, wash again with warm/hot water and detergent.
 - Place used gloves and all disposable paper into double plastic bags.
 - Put fresh gloves on, seal bags and dispose of in an external rubbish bin.
 - Remove gloves and wash hands thoroughly using soap and warm water.
 - Put fresh gloves on, rinse any clothes, cloths, bedding or clothing that is soiled and place in the washing machine - do a cold wash first, followed by a warm/hot wash.

Never use hot water for the initial clean-up of a blood spill or in the washing machine cycle. Hot water will make blood stick to the surface.

Contaminated Waste

Headway Gippsland Inc. does not deal with quantities of hazardous waste however as a rule when working with people in their homes staff should understand the following guidelines:

- Contaminated waste is defined as human material, which has the potential to cause a microbiological or pathological hazard to health for example blood, human waste when a person is receiving treatment such as chemotherapy.
- Contaminated waste must be segregated i.e., placed in an appropriate leak-proof bag and then double bagged again.
- Sharp objects should never be placed into contaminated waste bags. Solid sharps containers should be available for use where sharps are being used. Headway Gippsland Inc. employees are not expected to handle sharps such as needles but a participant may have needles and sharps in the house if they are a diabetic for example.

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- Human waste including urine and faeces should be disposed of in the lavatory.

Good hygiene

- Handwashing - regular handwashing with soap and warm water, this includes before and after eating, after going to the toilet and when you arrive at a person's house and before you leave.
- Use of hand sanitiser - use alcohol-based hand sanitiser when you are not able to wash your hands with soap and water.
- Cough and sneeze etiquette - always cough or sneeze into your elbow or use a tissue to cover your mouth or nose and dispose of the tissue immediately and wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces you use often such as benchtops, desks and doorknobs.
- Clean and disinfect objects you use often such as mobile phones, keys, wallets and work passes.
- Use 'tap and go' instead of cash where possible.
- Increase the amount of fresh air by opening windows or changing air conditioning.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Headway Gippsland Inc. will work with employees, participants, funding bodies and state health departments to ensure that PPE is available and accessible for use as required.
- PPE can be given from the Morwell Office or if you are not able to get there you can purchase this and you will be reimbursed.

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Resources

- <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>
- <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/information-community-services-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>
- <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/information-people-disability-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>