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Owner Sherie Goldbach: Project Coordinator
Policy Area Infection Prevention
Applicability UNC Medical Center

Patient Exposure to Potentially Infectious Body Fluids and Human Milk

I. Description

Describes the policy and procedure for patient exposure to potentially infectious body fluids.

II. Policy

The intent of this policy is to outline the steps necessary when a patient is potentially exposed to another person's blood (or other potentially infectious body fluids) or unscreened human milk from a person other than the baby's mother.

A. Definitions

1. Infectious body fluids include blood and all body fluids containing visible blood. Other potentially infectious body fluids include semen, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pleural fluid, peritoneal fluid, pericardial fluid, amniotic fluid, and breast milk.
2. Possible means of transmission:
 - a. Exposure to blood or other potentially infectious material via percutaneous injury, mucous membrane exposure, or non-intact skin.
 - b. Ingestion of milk from a source other than the milk bank or the mother.
 - c. Human bites that break the skin.

3. Contact with intact skin is not an exposure. Non-bloody body fluids (e.g., sweat, tears, saliva, vomitus, stool) have not been associated with transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), or Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).

B. Notifications

1. Responsibilities of involved parties.
 - a. In the event of a patient exposure to potentially infectious body fluids, complete all steps in [Attachment 1: Patient Exposure to Potentially Infectious Body Fluids Other Than Human Milk Exposure - Follow-Up Protocol Checklist](#) or [Attachment 2: Patient and Employee Exposure \(2-way\): Follow-Up Protocol Checklist](#), depending on the nature of the potential exposure.

C. Blood or Other Potentially Infectious Materials Exposure Notification

In the event that a patient is potentially exposed to another patient's or a staff member's potentially infectious bodily fluid refer to the information below and complete all steps in [Attachment 1: Patient Exposure to Potentially Infectious Body Fluids Other than Human Milk Exposure: Follow-Up Protocol Checklist](#).

1. The attending physician for the exposed patient must inform their patient of the patient's laboratory test results and provide appropriate counseling based upon the results.
 - a. If the source patient is found positive for one or more bloodborne pathogens, contact the Infectious Disease (ID) Consult for up-to-date information on the post-exposure prophylaxis to be offered to the exposed patient. It is the responsibility of the attending physician to arrange for appropriate care and management, including appropriate follow up testing of the exposed patient. The attending physician and/or Infectious Disease (ID) Consult are responsible for documenting the recommendations in the exposed patient's medical record.
 - b. If the source patient is found negative for all the bloodborne pathogens tested, there are no specific treatment recommendations. If the attending has further questions about counseling or treatment guidelines, please contact the ID Consult service for further advice.
2. HIV, HCV, and HBV tests ordered under "Patient Exposure Panel" in EPIC for the exposure event will result in the patient not being charged for the testing. Risk Management can remove all charges related to follow-up care, including post-exposure prophylactic therapy if indicated.

3. If the exposed patient develops HIV, HCV, or HBV (maximum incubation periods: HBV, 6 months; HCV, 6 months; HIV, 4 months), related to the exposure event, inform Risk Management (984-974-3041) and contact Infectious Disease (ID) Consult for treatment recommendations.
4. If a staff member is the source of exposure to a patient, the staff member may be tested at Campus Health (UNC student), UNC Health Occupational Health Service (UNC Health employee or volunteer), University Employee Occupational Health Service (UNC University employee), or, if the above are closed (nights and weekends), testing may be obtained via the UNC Health Emergency Department (UNC ED). Staff should call the Needlestick Hotline at 984-974-4480 when blood or body fluid exposure occurs. If the source of the exposure is not an employee (contract worker, non-UNC student, other), testing may be obtained via the UNC Health ED unless a prior agreement for service with OHS has been established.

D. Management of Exposure to Human Milk (e.g., an infant receives milk from wrong mother)

1. Each mother feeds and pumps milk for her own baby and care should be taken that it is never mislabeled, contaminated, or misappropriated (given to the wrong baby). For additional information refer to the Nursing policy: [Human Milk \(HM\) and Prepared Feedings Administration](#).
2. In the event that a patient has inadvertently received human milk from a source other than his/her own mother or an approved human milk bank, complete all steps in the [Worksheet for Human Milk Exposure](#), including both the Human Milk Exposure Follow-up Protocol Checklist and the Directions for Obtaining Bloodborne Disease Screening Labs After a Human Milk Exposure sections.

III. References

Red Book, American Academy of Pediatrics: 2024-2027 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases.

Kofman AD, Struble KA, Heneine W, et al. 2025 US Public Health Service Guidelines for the Management of Occupational Exposures to Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Recommendations for Post-exposure Prophylaxis in Healthcare Settings. *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*. Published online 2025:1-11. doi:10.1017/ice.2025.10254

CDC. Breast Milk Mix-Up. <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/php/guidelines-recommendations/other-mothers-milk.html>. Accessed 3 March 2026.

IV. Related Policies

[Infection Prevention: Worksheet for Human Milk Exposure](#)

[Nursing Policy: Care and Management of the Breastfeeding and/or Human Milk Feeding Dyad](#)

V. Responsible for Content

Infection Prevention Department

All Revision Dates

05/2026, 02/2026, 05/2025, 09/2023, 09/2021, 11/2020, 02/2019, 02/2018, 10/2017, 06/2016

Attachments



[Attachment 1 - Patient Exposure to Potentially Infectious Body Fluids Other Than Human Milk - Follow-Up Protocol Checklist](#)

[Attachment 2 - Patient and Employee Exposure 2way - Follow-Up Protocol Checklist](#)

[Attachment 3 - Worksheet for Human Milk Exposure](#)

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Policy Stat Administrator	Judith Strubin: Mgr Program-IP	05/2026
	Emily Vavalle: HCS Exec Dir Infection Prevention	05/2026
	Sherie Goldbach: Project Coordinator	05/2026

Applicability

UNC Medical Center