



What are “Standard Precautions”

Standard Precautions are a group of routine infection prevention and control practices and measures that should be used for **all** service users at **all** times, regardless of suspected, confirmed or presumed infectious status, in any setting in which healthcare is delivered. Standard Precautions are based on the principle that all blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions (except sweat), non-intact skin and mucous membranes may contain transmissible infectious agents (germs). Standard Precautions should be used when dealing with:

- Blood (included dried blood)
- Body fluids (secretions and excretions excluding sweat) regardless of whether or not they contain visible blood
- Non-intact skin
- Mucous membranes



Background

Universal Precautions were first introduced in 1985-88 in response to the emergence of HIV and they were primarily designed to protect healthcare workers from exposure to blood borne viruses (e.g. Hep. B, HIV). They were replaced in 1996 by Standard Precautions to incorporate Body Substance Precautions so were intended to protect staff and service users alike. Standard Precautions were expanded in 2007 because of the lessons learnt after the SARS epidemic.

Standard precautions are considered the foundation stone for preventing the transmission of infectious agents in all healthcare settings and they should be applied with all service users at all times regardless of their infectious status.

Standard Precautions

Body fluids frequently contain large numbers of micro-organisms and are a major source of germs which cause healthcare associated infections (HCAI).

The majority of people with blood borne infections, eg. Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV, will not have any signs or symptoms of infection, others may be in their incubation period, so it is important to treat all people the same.

The key elements of Standard Precautions are:

1. Hand hygiene
2. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
3. Service user placement in residential units
4. Healthcare waste disposal
5. Safe handling and disposal of sharps
6. Environmental hygiene
7. Management of blood and body fluid spillage
8. Decontamination of medical equipment
9. Linen handling
10. Management of sharps injury
11. Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette*
12. Safe injection practices*
13. Use of a facemask when performing special lumbar puncture procedures*



*New additions to Standard Precautions - CDC 2007

Examples of Standard Precautions in Action

Germ	Method of Spread	Standard Precaution*
Common Cold <i>Rhinovirus</i>	Sneezing, coughing, hands	Respiratory hygiene Hand hygiene Use of PPE Environmental hygiene
MRSA <i>Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus</i>	Hands of healthcare worker	Hand hygiene Use of PPE Environmental hygiene
C diff <i>Clostridium difficile</i>	Hands Contaminated environment and service user equipment	Hand hygiene Use of PPE Environmental hygiene Decontamination of medical equipment Linen handling

In certain circumstances additional precautions/measures may be required in addition to Standard Precautions e.g. service users pulmonary TB, Pertussis etc.

Additional advice can be obtained from your infection control team / Department of Public Health/ Microbiology Department of local hospital.



Points to Remember

- Standard Precautions apply to **all** service users **all** the time regardless of whether you know about an infection they may have or not.
- Do not judge a service user's potential risk for having an infection by how they present themselves, or if they belong to a high risk group, e.g. IV drug users, prostitutes etc. 'Clean' people get infections too! Do not let your personal opinions decide how you treat a service user – **Standard Precautions must be applied to every service user.**
- Advice on the best precautions to be employed should be sought from the infection control team, Department of Public Health, Microbiology Department.
- Managing the spread of infection is a **team effort** – all staff must observe Standard Precautions no matter what grade or qualification they possess.

Group exercise

Who do we contact if we require additional advice on managing or controlling the spread of infection? Find out who to contact and ensure all staff have access to these details.

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