

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

1. **PURPOSE:** To provide guidelines for department personnel when there is a possibility of being exposed to communicable diseases.
2. **POLICY:** The Huntsville Police Department, in an effort to ensure the safety and well-being of its employees in all areas possible, hereby institutes a policy and procedure for personnel who may be exposed to communicable diseases.
3. **SCOPE:** This directive is applicable to all personnel.
4. **RESPONSIBILITY:** All personnel will be responsible for complying with this directive.
5. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - A. **COMMUNICABLE DISEASE:** A communicable disease is an infectious disease capable of being passed to another by contact with an infected individual or their body fluids. The following is a list of communicable diseases with which police and detention officers are most likely to come in contact: AIDS (HIV infection), Tuberculosis, Hepatitis, Typhoid, and Meningitis.
 - B. **UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS:** Universal precautions refers to the concept that all blood and body fluids should be treated as infectious because patients with bloodborne infections can be asymptomatic or unaware they are infected. Universal precautions include but are not limited to using disposable gloves and washing hands and other skin surface that may be contaminated
6. **AFTER EXPOSURE**
 - A. Upon being exposed to a communicable disease, personnel shall immediately notify their supervisor. All actions and decisions regarding the exposure will be under the Shift Commander's direction from the point of his or her notification. The employee **MUST** submit a First Report of Injury form as required by current procedures governing on the job injuries.
 - B. If an officer or employee is the victim of a human bite, sharp object coated with infectious material penetrating the skin, or infectious material coming in contact with moist membranes which are thinner than regular skin, specifically the eyes, nose and mouth, he/she should immediately:
 1. Wash the area thoroughly with soap and hot water unless the area in question is the eye, then only moderate temperature and plain water should be used to flush out possible infectious material.

2. Seek medical attention at the City Employee Health Clinic or Huntsville Hospital Emergency Room as soon as possible.
3. If there is an admission, suspicion, or diagnosis of any infectious contagious disease that an officer or employee is exposed to, the Madison County Health Department will be notified by the Office of the Chief of Police as soon as possible.
4. The individual suspected of having a communicable disease should be asked to submit to a blood test. If the individual refuses to submit to a blood test, documentation of the refusal should be made and forwarded to the Legal Department for appropriate action.
5. Testing of officers or employees who have been exposed to a communicable disease will be performed at Occupational Health Group as soon as possible after exposure. "As soon as possible" is defined as within 1-2 weeks. Tests will be scheduled through the City Employee Health Clinic
6. If the individual is not known to be infected with a communicable disease, but is involved in high-risk behavior:
 - a. The individual should be tested for a communicable disease. If testing is refused, document the refusal and forward the documentation to the Legal Department, as above.
 - b. If the individual tests negative and denies involvement in high-risk behavior as aforementioned, no further testing is necessary.
 - c. If the individual tests negative but is involved in high-risk behavior then the individual should be tested at three (3) and six (6) months and the officer or employee tested at six (6) weeks, three (3) months and six (6) months. Further testing may not be necessary.
7. All testing will be voluntary. Any officer or employee who is exposed, and refuses testing will be asked to sign an informed consent statement that says they were counseled and understand the risk of exposure and reasons for testing.
7. EXPOSURE PREVENTION: When possible, employees should use universal precautions when there is a possibility of being exposed to communicable diseases. The following guidelines are recommended to prevent exposure to communicable diseases:
 - A. Treat all blood and body secretions (such as saliva, urine, vomit, etc.) as if they were infectious.
 - B. The goal of infection control is to prevent potentially infected fluids from entering the body through the skin. This occurs in one of three ways.

1. Sharp object coated with infectious material penetrates the skin.
 2. Infectious material enters a pre-existing break in the skin, such as a cut.
 3. Infectious material comes in contact with moist membranes, which are thinner than regular skin, specifically eyes, nose, and mouth.
- C. All objects covered with blood or other body fluids should be handled only with an object such as tweezers, etc., or by hand if protected with waterproof barrier such as gloves (composition is less important than waterproof status) or inverted plastic bag. All sharp objects that may be contaminated should be handled with extraordinary care.
- D. In situations where splattering or spraying blood or other body fluids may occur, eye protection should be worn. These would include regular eyeglasses (prescription or safety), goggles, or face shields.
- E. Disposable paper filter masks should be used when there is a likelihood for fine aerosolization of secretion or blood. (Such situations should be extremely rare, but one such exposure could be during the use of sawing equipment for removal of victim from wreckage, etc.) Routine use during investigation is not indicated. During transport of an individual with an infectious respiratory disease such as tuberculosis, the mask should be worn by the subject for maximum protection. There is no indication for the use of masks during transport of non-coughing, non-respiratory diseased individuals (e.g. not necessary with HIV or AIDS).
- F. When performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, reusable mouthpieces should be used.
- G. Any equipment contaminated with blood or body fluid should be cleaned and disinfected while gloves are worn. The two best disinfecting agents are a diluted liquid chlorine bleach solution (one part bleach and ten parts water freshly made) or phenol disinfectant (examples are Lysol, Lysol spray, and commercial germicidal sprays for hospital use). The contaminated area should be soaked with the disinfecting agent first, then cleaned in the usual fashion while wearing gloves.
- H. Contaminated clothing can be laundered or dry-cleaned in the usual fashion without a special germ killer being used. Waterproof disposable gowns and aprons should be used when there is high probability of clothing exposure to a large volume of blood or fluids.
- I. All wounds, cuts, abrasions, or other open skin defects should be covered with a water-resistant ointment and then covered with a small bandage.
- J. If any skin-to-skin or body fluid contact occurs, the area should be washed promptly with soap and water (eyes flushed with water only). Disinfectants can be used but are not necessary.

- K. All disposable items (gloves, paper masks, coveralls, shoe covers, etc.) worn during any skin-to-skin or body fluid contact should be removed and placed in a waterproof bag, then turned in at the Detention Facility where they will be clearly marked “CONTAMINATED.” Gloves should be removed by the inverted method from the cuff end. All contaminated items, properly bagged and sealed, will be taken to the Huntsville Hospital to be burned in its incinerator.
8. EQUIPMENT: Each officer may be issued a kit, which contains items to prevent contamination, by exposure to a diseased person. The kit shall be in the possession of the officer during each tour of duty and any item used will be replaced through the Supply Section upon the officer’s request. Each kit shall contain the following items:
- A. Disposable waterproof gloves in three (3) sizes.
 - B. Disposal paper isolation mask, one (1).
 - C. Reusable mouthpieces or airways, one adult and one child.
 - D. Spray disinfectant or disinfectant wipes.”
 - E. Plastic re-sealable bag, one (1).