

Health Policies

The Health Policies are guidelines to help students navigate health.

Student Exposure to Infectious Disease Policy

Scope

The spread of certain blood borne pathogens and highly infectious diseases is a health hazard for patients and care givers. This requires processes to protect patients and students from the spread of these diseases. The purpose of this policy is to educate, avoid infection, and respond to exposures or infection to protect the rights and health of both students and patients.

Policy

Education and Evaluation

All Dell Medical School students and students visiting Dell Medical School shall receive prevention education. Those with an occupational exposure to a blood borne pathogen shall have the exposure evaluated and documented by a healthcare provider following the applicable post-exposure protocol.

Infection Control

Medical Students, like all health care workers, bear a responsibility to prevent the spread of infection. Pursuant to that responsibility, Medical Students will follow universal precautions at all times.

Occupational exposures to blood borne pathogens requiring immediate assessment and the possible initiation of prophylactic medical treatment are defined as: 1) percutaneous injury (e.g. needlestick, laceration with a sharp object); 2) contact of mucous membranes or ocular membranes; and 3) contact of non-intact skin (e.g. skin that is chapped, abraded) with blood or other potentially infectious fluid (e.g. semen; vaginal secretions; and cerebrospinal, synovial, pleural, peritoneal, pericardial and amniotic fluids; bloody body fluids and unfixed tissue). Occupational exposures requiring monitoring include the three above requiring prophylaxis and contact with intact skin that is prolonged or involves an extensive area with blood or other potentially infectious fluid (semen; vaginal secretions; and cerebrospinal, synovial, pleural, peritoneal, pericardial and amniotic fluids; bloody body fluids and unfixed tissue). All exposures within those categories must report to the nearest Seton Emergency Room within 2 hours of the exposure.

A student exposed to infectious or communicable illness considered by the CDC as an occupational risk for healthcare workers, or known to have such infectious or communicable illness, or a student that suspects they have such an infectious or communicable illness are required to contact the UTHealth Austin Worklife Clinic and follow the recommendations of that clinic.

If these recommendations limit the student's ability to meet curricular requirements, the course director will attempt to accommodate if possible, and consult with the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education and Associate Dean for Student Affairs, as needed. Students should seek advising regarding implications for specialty training from Specialty Specific Advisor(s) in the field(s) of interest.

Should any clinic site be determined by the UTHealth Austin Worklife Clinic to be unsafe for learners, learner involvement at that site shall be prohibited until such time as the health risk is resolved.

Detailed Procedures

Procedures for all situations described in this policy are detailed in the "Procedures for Student Exposure to Infectious Disease."

Student Exposure to Infectious Disease Procedures

Prevention and Education Protocol

All students will receive training in Universal Precautions as part of the Developing Outstanding Clinical Skills course prior to seeing patients. This training shall meet the minimum requirements for students as outlined in The University of Texas at Austin Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan (Appendix E).

- a. All students will receive training in the Post-Exposure Protocol as part of the Milestone 0 session prior to beginning clinical coursework.
- b. Visiting Students will receive on-line training in Universal Precautions, and attest to having read and understood the policy and protocol as part of onboarding, prior to beginning a rotation.
- c. Should any clinic site be determined by the UTHealth Austin Worklife Clinic to be unsafe for learners, learner involvement at that site shall be prohibited until such time as the health risk is resolved.

Post-Exposure Protocol

Applies to Dell Medical School Students and Visiting Students

Immediately post exposure:

- a. Clean the area of exposure or injury with soap and water, or flush mucous membranes thoroughly.
- b. Report exposure to your supervising faculty member, and if applicable, the charge nurse.
- c. Seek immediate care/treatment in the emergency department. Healthcare providers in the emergency department will recommend and initiate prophylaxis as appropriate.
 - i. Students rotating in a Seton Family Healthcare Hospital:
 1. Within two hours of exposure, report to the Emergency Room in the Seton facility where you are working.
 2. Call the Seton Occupational Health HURT line to report your exposure 512-324-4878 or in-house at ext. 44878. Have the source patient name and Medical Record number, if possible.
 3. Inform the Emergency Room you are a Dell Medical School student - do not use your personal insurance.
 4. Register as a Seton Worker's Compensation case – do not use your personal insurance.
 5. Sign a release of medical information to facilitate follow-up care so results can be sent to the follow-up care provider.
 - ii. Students who are working outside of a Seton Family Healthcare Hospital.
 1. Within two hours of exposure, report to the nearest Seton Emergency Room
 2. The student should request that the off-site facility (where the exposure occurred) test the source patient. This should happen before the source patient leaves the facility.
 3. Inform the Emergency Room you are a Dell Medical School student - do not use your personal insurance.

4. Sign a release of medical information to facilitate follow-up care so results can be sent to the follow-up care provider.
- d. Students should also submit a report to UT Environmental Health and Safety (512-471-3511)
- e. If the exposure occurred at a Seton Healthcare Family Hospital, students must complete the Dynamic Online Event Reporting System (DOERS) accident report with the appropriate charge nurse, or the Seton Occupational Health Nurse as directed.
- f. The Emergency department will refer exposed persons a provider for ongoing evaluation treatment. Students should seek a first follow-up visit within 72 hours after the initial exposure.

Within 72 hours of exposure:

- a. Students should seek follow-up care from UTHHealth Austin WorkLife Clinic.

Visiting Students

In addition to following the post exposure protocol, visiting students should contact their home institution for further instructions once they have sought initial treatment following the Dell Medical School protocol. Dell Medical School students on an away rotation should check their host institution's policies, procedures, and resources for visiting medical students in need of emergent care, and follow-up with the UT Austin University Health Services.

Accommodations and Advising

For students requiring accommodations to complete the curriculum, these accommodations are managed under the Technical Standards for DMS and the University Policy on Disabilities in collaboration with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities.

Students with chronic infectious disease should discuss specialty training implications with a Specialty Specific Advisor.

References:

The University of Texas at Austin Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan: <https://ehs.utexas.edu/working-safely/biological-safety/bloodborne-pathogens>