



Policy Title: Exposure to Infectious & Environmental Hazards

Accountable Dean(s) or Director(s):

Associate Dean for Admissions & Student Affairs

Reviewed By:

Office of Environmental Health & Safety
Campus Health & Wellness

Approval Body:

Executive Faculty

RELEVANT LCME STANDARD:

12.8: Student Exposure Policies/Procedures

POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE:

The LCME states: A medical school has policies in place that effectively address medical student exposure to infectious and environmental hazards, including the following:

- The education of medical students about methods of prevention
- The procedures for care and treatment after exposure, including a definition of financial responsibility
- The effects of infectious and environmental disease or disability on medical student learning activities

Additionally, all registered medical students (including visiting students) are informed of these policies before undertaking any educational activities that would place them at risk.

DEFINITIONS:

For purposes of this policy, the following definition applies:

- An *exposure* is defined as a percutaneous injury (e.g., needle stick or cut with a sharp object) or contact of mucous membrane or non-intact skin (e.g., exposed skin that is chapped, abraded, or afflicted with dermatitis) with blood, tissue, or other body fluids that are potentially infectious.

POLICY GUIDELINES:

A. Education about methods of prevention

- At the beginning of each academic year (T1-T4), *all* medical students are required to complete an online blood-borne pathogens training module and submit documentation confirming completion.

- **Visiting students** must verify completion of required U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training as part of the Visiting Student Learning Opportunities (VSLO) application process.

Additional Education

- For first-year students, prevention measures are reinforced prior to placement in student-run clinics and include instruction in proper handling of sharps, hand-washing, and scrubbing techniques.
- Prior to beginning third-year clinical rotations, students are required to complete N95 respirator training, respiratory protection medical clearance, and fit testing prior to visiting clinical sites.

B. Procedures for care and treatment after exposure:

Tulane medical students are provided an information card with exposure instructions which must be affixed to their identification badge. Policies and procedures are also contained in the Student Handbook (required annual attestation) and posted on the SOM policy website. Upon acceptance at Tulane, *visiting students* are provided with a link to the exposure policy along with instructions for care and treatment after exposure.

In the event of a needlestick or other exposure, ALL students are instructed to:

- Wash the site of the needlestick or skin exposure for five minutes with water and anti-microbial soap.
- If an eye or mucous membrane exposure, flush the exposed area for five minutes with water.
- Immediately report the incident to your preceptor/supervisor and seek treatment as soon as possible but ideally within 2 hours of exposure. Students should follow facility protocol, which may include a visit to the Occupational Health Office or the Emergency Department. If there is any uncertainty, proceed to the nearest Emergency Department for evaluation.

Next Steps for Tulane Students:

- Call the Student Health Center Downtown at (504) 988-6929. If the needlestick or exposure occurs outside of normal business hours (Mon-Fri, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm), leave a message and your call will be returned within one business day.
- Refer to the Tulane Student Health Center Website ([Bloodborne Pathogens Emergencies](#)) for detailed information and instructions, including downloading the Bloodborne Pathogens exposure packet.
- If not already aware, report the incident to your course or clerkship director along with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
- Start any recommended postexposure treatment as soon as possible.

*Note that Tulane students on away rotations will follow the exposure protocols in place at the site of the away rotation. However, students should let their away clerkship coordinator know as soon as possible and contact Tulane's Downtown Student Health Center at (504) 988-6929 for guidance and long-term follow up.

Next Steps for Visiting Students:

- After you have received immediate care, notify the Tulane departmental coordinator to make aware and contact your home institution for further long-term follow-up/insurance/billing information.

Financial responsibility:

Tulane Medical Students

- Tulane medical students are required to maintain active health insurance and must utilize their health insurance to cover the necessary care and treatment expenses due to exposure, including evaluation, testing, and treatment costs. Any out-of-pocket expenses associated with initial care and treatment will be covered by the Office of Admissions and Student Affairs.
- When seeking treatment, please note that students are *not* employees and thus not eligible for workers' compensation. Therefore, all treatment must go through their health insurance. Students should stress this on site and provide their insurance card. Do not allow the facility to process the claim under workers' compensation or you will encounter significant billing problems later.
- After you have received immediate care, notify the Tulane departmental coordinator and contact the Downtown Student Health Center, which can generally provide the most cost-effective long-term follow-up/insurance/billing information.

Visiting Students:

- Visiting students are required to maintain health insurance to participate in rotations at Tulane. Visiting students are advised to utilize their health insurance to cover necessary care and treatment expenses due to exposure, including evaluation, testing, and treatment costs.
- When seeking treatment, please note that visiting students are *not* employees and thus not eligible for workers' compensation. Therefore, all treatment must go through their health insurance. Visiting students should stress this on site and provide their insurance card. Do not allow the facility to process the claim under workers' compensation or you will encounter significant billing problems later.
- Tulane SOM does not cover any treatment costs for visiting students. If you are a visiting student, notify the Tulane departmental coordinator after you have received care and contact your home institution for further long-term follow-up/insurance/billing information.

C. Impact on student learning activities:

Students who are infected with a potentially transmissible disease will not be excluded from participating in patient-care activities or restricted in their access to patient-care services because of their health status, *unless* medically-based judgments in individual cases establish that exclusion or restriction is appropriate for the welfare of patients, the individual, or other members of the patient-care community. Students with infectious or communicable illnesses or with an immune compromising condition should consult with the Student Health Center regarding the advisability of working with patients including any limitations or other concerns as they relate to clinical duties and educational activities. Note that students who experience limitations as a result of a needlestick or other exposure may be allowed to meet academic obligations asynchronously or may be granted certain provisions to make up face-to-face clinical time when their health improves. If needed, students may undergo evaluation by the School of

Medicine and the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility to determine appropriate accommodations.

Regardless of illness or condition, students must comply with the School of Medicine's Technical Standards Policy. Failure to meet Technical Standards with reasonable accommodations may require that the student appear before the School of Medicine's Professionalism and Promotion Committee to determine a plan, if possible, for successful resumption of the medical school curriculum.

RELATED INFORMATION/POLICIES:

Technical Standards

LAST REVIEW DATE/APPROVAL:

Office of Environmental Health & Safety: 08/28/24

Campus Health & Wellness: 09/05/24

Executive Faculty: 10/15/24

REVIEW CYCLE:

Every 3 years