

Faith Academy Infectious Disease Policy

as written by

Alabama Independent School Association



Approved by the
State of Alabama
Department of Public Health

PURPOSE

The Alabama Independent School Association and Faith Academy have adopted this policy in an effort to minimize the possibility of transmission of any infectious disease during school activities and athletic practice sessions or contests.

The policy primarily addresses blood borne pathogens such as the hepatitis B virus (HBV) and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). However, it also discusses common-sense precautions against the spread of less-serious infectious diseases such as influenza and the common cold viruses (rhinoviruses)

Much of this policy has been written with contact sports such as football, wrestling and basketball in mind. However, it is applicable to all sports and activities.

REGULATIONS

All faculty and staff must become knowledgeable of these regulations and be prepared to follow the stated guidelines when an injury results in bleeding during any school activity. Faith Academy officials are instructed to monitor situations in athletic contests in which any injury occurs and results in bleeding. Officials will follow the appropriate guidelines as set forth in this policy when those situations do occur.

BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS

Blood borne pathogens are pathogenic microorganisms present in human blood and cause disease in humans. In addition to blood, these pathogens may be present in other body fluids such as semen, vaginal fluids, breast milk and any body fluid which is obviously contaminated with blood. These pathogens include, but are not limited to hepatitis B virus and HIV.

Hepatitis B is a virus resulting in serious disease of the liver. Victims can suffer long-term consequences such as cirrhosis and liver cancer. HIV is the virus which, by weakening the immune system, causes AIDS and makes a person susceptible to infections their immune systems normally would be able to fight off. AIDS is currently incurable but is treatable.

Although hepatitis B virus is a much more common virus than HIV, it is HIV and AIDS which have served to heighten public concern about blood borne pathogens. This concern has prompted the AISA and other such organizations to adopt such guidelines.

The precise risk of HIV transmission from an infected individual by exposure to blood or certain other body fluids of an infected individual is not known. However, evidence would suggest it is extremely low. In fact, the possibility of contracting HIV in this manner is much less than contracting HBV and other blood borne viral infections.

Therefore, student-athletes, coaches and officials must understand that while it is theoretically possible for HIV to be transmitted by blood from one individual to another via an open wound or mucous membrane contact, the probability of this occurring is extremely low. Precautions should be taken to minimize the possibility of transmission.

RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS AGAINST THE TRANSMISSION OF BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS

Proper handling of all situations in which exposure to blood occurs will greatly reduce the possibility of transmission of blood borne pathogens such as hepatitis B virus or HIV.

Injuries resulting in the presence of blood are most likely to occur in physical education classes, athletic practice sessions and athletic contests. It is extremely important that teachers, coaches, officials and student-athletes observe the following precautions and treat all blood and any body fluid visibly contaminated with blood as potentially infectious.

1. Before competing, a student-athlete must cover any open wound on his body. This will reduce the risk of transmission of a blood borne pathogen from his open wound to the open wound or mucous membrane of another person or vice versa.

Important Note: *“Coach”, “teacher”, “administrator” and “official” may be substituted wherever use of the term “student-athlete” is used throughout this policy. Also, the pronouns “she”, “her” and “hers” are applicable in all instances where “he”, “him”, or “his” is used.*

2. Trainers (or coaches/managers) should render first aid to student-athletes who are bleeding. These individuals should be properly trained in the correct manner to treat injuries which involve bleeding so they will not become contaminated with the blood.
3. When rendering first aid, an individual should wear protective gloves (such as disposable latex or vinyl gloves) any time blood, open wounds or mucous membranes are involved. Clean gloves should be worn for each student-athlete treated or when treating the same student-athlete more than once.
4. If an individual gets someone else’s blood on his skin, he should wear protective gloves and wash the blood off with a disposable towel using soap and water or disinfectant such as isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol).
5. If a student-athlete begins to bleed during practice or competition, play must be stopped, the injured student-athlete removed and any potentially contaminated surfaces (such as the basketball court or wrestling mat) cleaned using a disinfectant solution of bleach and water. The recommended mixture is nine parts water to one part bleach (one cup bleach to nine cups water). The surface should be rinsed with clean water to avoid mucous membrane exposure to the disinfectant. The individual cleaning should wear protective gloves.
6. A student-athlete removed from an athletic practice or contest due to bleeding must have the bleeding stopped and any wound covered before returning to competition. If the bleeding resumes, the practice or contest must be stopped and potentially contaminated surfaces cleaned. It is up to the discretion of the official in charge of the competition (i.e., referee in football and basketball, home plate umpire in baseball, etc.) as to how many times the completions should be stopped due to a student-athlete’s bleeding before he is disqualified from further participation. The decision to disqualify should be based on the health of the student-athlete.

7. An individual who has treated an injury where blood was present or has cleaned a potentially contaminated surface should wash his hands with soap and hot water whether or not protective gloves were worn.
8. Student-athletes should shower using a liberal amount of soap and hot water after each practice and competition.
9. Towels used for any purpose by student-athletes, coaches or officials should not be used to clean blood from any potentially contaminated surface, neither should towels be shared by student-athletes, coaches or officials

Note: *Disposable towels should be used in all cleaning of blood contamination. Towels, protective gloves and other materials used in cleaning, as well as any bandages used to stop bleeding, should be placed in a sealed container lined with a plastic bag. Plastic bags are to be closed and discarded daily. Do not reuse the plastic bags.*

OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Infectious diseases such as influenza, the common cold (rhinovirus) and mononucleosis are generally transmitted by respiration (rhinoviruses) and the mononucleosis virus is generally transmitted by respiratory secretions, saliva and nasal discharge. This occurs through the air when an infected person sneezes or coughs or by hand contact with contaminated surfaces. Thus, the chances of becoming infected with one of these viruses is greater in a confined area where a number of individuals breathe the same air, or when individuals share objects such as towels, cups, water bottles, eating utensils, etc.

Unlike blood borne pathogens such HBV and HIV which may have an incubation period of days, weeks or years, colds and influenza usually manifest themselves through symptoms in a matter of hours to days after being exposed. Symptoms of influenza (fever, headache, joint pains, sore throat and cough) and the common cold (runny nose, sneezing, tearing of eyes) usually prevent the student-athlete from participating in a practice or competition due to the weakness that results from their presence.

RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS AGAINST THE TRANSMISSION OF OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES

The AISA recommends the following precautions be taken to help prevent the spread of such diseases as influenza, the common cold and mononucleosis in an athletic setting:

1. A teacher, coach or student suffering from influenza or other similar illness should stay home from school as long as he has a fever. An individual suffering from these illnesses can remain contagious as long as he has a fever, usually not more than two or three days.
2. Again, avoid the sharing of towels, cups and water bottles. It is poor hygienic practice to share these items.
3. Keep locker room areas well ventilated. Good air circulation may lessen the possibility of airborne spread.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For further information concerning infectious diseases, contact the State of Alabama Department of Public Health at 242-5131.

Note: Faculty and staff must become knowledgeable of these regulations and be prepared to follow the stated guidelines when an injury results in bleeding during any school activity.