

PRACTICE STANDARD FOR BCCNM LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES

Communicable Diseases: Preventing Nurse-to- Client Transmission

Practice standards set out requirements for specific aspects of LPN practice. They link with other BCCNM standards, policies and bylaws and all legislation relevant to LPN practice.

What is a communicable disease?

A communicable disease is caused by an infectious agent that is spread from person to person, either directly or indirectly. This practice standard provides licensed practical nurses (LPNs) with information to make decisions about preventing, detecting and controlling the spread of infectious agents from nurses to clients.

Employers provide the organizational supports and systems necessary for LPNs to meet BCCNM Standards of Practice.

Principles

1. LPNs have a professional, ethical and legal duty to provide their clients with safe care, including protecting them from the risk of infection.
2. LPNs are aware of the risks and dangers of transmitting infections to clients.
3. LPNs follow “routine practices and additional precautions”¹ for infection control for all clients at all times.

¹ “Routine practices and additional precautions” describe infection prevention and control practices that reduce exposure to, or minimize transmission of, potentially pathogenic organisms in the health care setting.

4. LPNs who are involved in exposure-prone procedures² must know whether they have a blood-borne pathogen³ themselves so they can take appropriate measures to protect patients from any risk of transmission.
5. LPNs who have a communicable disease themselves consider methods and risks of transmission and take steps to prevent passing the infection to clients.
6. LPNs who test positive for a blood-borne pathogen must consult an expert in infectious diseases and follow any advice related to restrictions on their practice, including the possibility of withdrawing from a procedure.
7. LPNs who expose a client, in any way, to their blood are ethically obligated to be tested for blood-borne pathogens.
8. If an LPN has good reason to believe that a colleague with an infection is practising unsafely and is endangering clients, the LPN has a responsibility to take action, up to and including reporting the colleague to his or her supervisor and/or the colleague's regulatory organization.

Applying the principles to practice

- Be vigilant about hand washing before and after contact with a client or any potentially contaminated articles. Hand washing or using a hand antiseptic is the single most effective way to protect clients from infection.
- Understand how the principles underlying "routine practices and standard precautions" apply in your practice to any infection you have – from a cold to hepatitis B virus (HBV).
- If you have cold symptoms, but you feel capable of working, manage your symptoms so you do not pass the infection to your clients or colleagues. If your clients are particularly vulnerable, discuss a temporary reassignment with your manager.
- If you have influenza symptoms, such as fever, chills and achiness, stay home and follow agency policy. You are unlikely to work effectively and you are likely contagious.
- Keep up-to-date on the risks of exposure, transmission and treatment of blood-borne pathogens and other infections.
- If you have an infection such as HBV, hepatitis C virus (HCV) or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that could put clients at risk, seek confidential advice from an infectious disease expert about treatment options and about disclosing information to colleagues and your employer.

² Exposure-prone procedures are procedures during which transmission of HBV (hepatitis B virus), HCV (hepatitis C virus) or HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) from a health-care worker to a client is most likely to occur.

³ A blood-borne pathogen is a microorganism such as hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV) or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), that can be transmitted from one person to another through contact with blood or other body fluids.

- If you have risk factors or suspect that you have a blood-borne pathogen, or if you carry out exposure-prone procedures, seek testing and advice from a knowledgeable health care practitioner.
- Keep your own immunizations up-to-date to protect your clients, your colleagues and yourself from vaccine-preventable diseases, including influenza.

For more information

Email [BCCNM's Regulatory Practice Consultants](#) or call 604.742.6200 x8803 (Metro Vancouver)

Toll-free 1.866.880.7101 x8803 (within Canada only)

[BCCNM Bylaws](#)

[BCCNM Practice Standards](#)

[BCCNM Professional Standards](#)

[BCCNM Scope of Practice Standards](#)

Other resources

British Columbia Centre for Disease Control [Communicable Disease Control Blood and Body Fluid Exposure Management](#)

Canadian Council for Practical Nurse Regulators [Code of Ethics for Licensed Practical Nurses in Canada](#)

Public Health Agency of Canada [Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings](#)

Public Health Agency of Canada [Seasonal Influenza - Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Management in Home Care Settings](#)

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