

## **Universal Precautions and OSHA Compliance Guidelines**

*As midwives, we are committed to providing safe, holistic care through practices that minimize the risk of infection transmission and ensure compliance with OSHA regulations. These guidelines integrate evidence-based safety measures with midwifery values, including individualized care, physiological birth support, and respect for client autonomy and community norms.*

### **1. Handwashing**

- Wash hands with soap and warm water before and after every client interaction, after glove removal, before handling equipment, and after contact with body fluids.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer only when soap and water are unavailable and hands are not visibly soiled.

### **2. Handling and Disposal of Sharps**

- Use puncture-resistant sharps containers at every birth site.
- Do not recap, bend, or manually remove needles.
- Transport sharps containers in a secondary container when mobile.

### **3. Use of Personal Protective Equipment**

- Wear clean gloves for any contact with mucous membranes, blood, or bodily fluids.
- Use sterile gloves for procedures requiring aseptic technique (e.g., vaginal exams, perineal repairs).
- Wear face shields, goggles, and gowns when splash exposure is possible during labor or birth.

### **4. Disposal of Single-Use Items**

- Dispose of all contaminated single-use items (e.g., gloves, gauze) in clearly labeled biohazard bags.
- Never reuse disposable equipment.

### **5. Disinfection of Environmental Surfaces and Reusable Equipment**

- Clean and disinfect all birth surfaces and reusable tools with EPA-registered disinfectants after each use.
- Follow manufacturer guidelines for soaking times and cleaning protocols .

### **6. Handling of Soiled Linens**

- Place soiled linens directly into leak-proof bags.
- Wash separately using hot water and detergent, and dry completely before reuse.

## 7. Labor in Water and Waterbirth

- Clients must shower prior to entering the birth tub.
- Use a disposable liner in portable tubs.
- Empty, clean, and disinfect tubs thoroughly after each use.
- Monitor water temperature and ensure clean, potable water is used throughout labor.

## 8. Handling and Disposal of the Placenta

- Double-bag placentas in leak-proof containers.
- Store at appropriate temperatures if the client opts to take it home, or dispose of it according to local health department regulations.

## 9. Respiratory Hygiene

- Encourage clients and family members with respiratory symptoms to wear masks.
- Midwives should wear masks if symptomatic or during flu season.
- Provide tissues and hand sanitizer at all visit locations.

## 10. Indications for Clean vs. Sterile Technique

- **Sterile technique:** Used for invasive procedures (e.g., vaginal exams, suturing, I.V. placement).
- **Clean technique:** Used for non-invasive care (e.g., abdominal palpation, vitals).

## 11. OSHA Compliance

- Maintain a Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan.
- Provide regular staff training on universal precautions and incident reporting.
- Keep records of vaccinations, training, and any exposure events.
- Report needle sticks or blood exposure per OSHA guidelines.

*This guideline reflects our profession's core values: trusting physiologic birth, minimizing interventions, and maintaining continuity of care. We uphold legal and ethical standards while ensuring that midwifery remains safe, respectful, and centered around the needs of clients and their families.*

## References

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