

# High Threat Pathogen (HTP) Precautions

Information on infection prevention and control practices for patients and visitors in acute care settings

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## What are High Threat Pathogens?

High Threat Pathogens (HTPs) refer to rare infectious diseases that cause severe illness and spread easily to others. They include some known diseases such as Ebola, Lassa, and Marburg viruses. They can also be unidentified or newly emerging pathogens. These HTPs can cause high fever, bleeding, shock and — in severe cases — death. They may lack effective treatment and vaccines.

\*It is important to note that COVID-19, influenza, and measles do not fall under the category of HTPs.

## How do HTPs spread?

HTPs usually spread from person to person. They often come from animals such as bats, rodents, or monkeys in certain parts of the world. A person can get infected from an animal and then pass it to others.

HTPs spread when blood or body fluids (BBFs) such as vomit, feces, urine, or semen from an infected person gets into another person's body through the eyes, mouth, nose, or broken skin.

Examples of how HTPs can spread:

- Touching infected BBFs
- Touching surfaces with infected BBFs
- Medical procedures that release infected fluids into the air

A person with a HTP is usually contagious after symptoms start, and they become more contagious as they get sicker. Because we don't always know exactly how some HTPs spread, health care teams use extra safety steps (called Additional Precautions) to protect everyone.

## Who is at risk?

**While the risk of high threat pathogens in British Columbia is low, health care teams are trained and ready to respond quickly and safely when needed.**

People who are in close contact with an infected person are at risk if they don't follow the health care team's safety measures and instructions.

Travelers from countries where HTPs are spreading or outbreaks are happening are at higher risk.

### What to expect at the hospital if you might have an HTP?

After getting admitted to the hospital, your care will depend on your symptoms, recent travel, possible contact to HTPs, tests results, and the hospital's safety procedures. Your care team will check on you often and adjust safety measures if needed. Here's what you can expect:

**If you do not have symptoms of an HTP**, you will get regular care like other patients.

**If you were exposed and start showing symptoms of an HTP**, your care team will take special additional safety measures to protect other patients and health care workers and prevent the infection from spreading further. Here is a summary of special precautions that might be taken:

- You might be placed in a restricted private area – such as a sectioned-off space in the emergency department, or a private room – under strict infection control measures. Please stay in this area unless your care team says it's okay to leave.
- You will have access to a private bathroom.
- Your care team might need to do tests and assess you before determining if family members can safely visit.
- Your care team will wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep themselves and other safe. This might include more than just masks and gloves. Here are some examples of what they might wear during your care:



#### A powered air purifier respirator (PAPR)

This is a special protective breathing system that gently blows filtered air in a hood/mask, making breathing easier while keeping harmful particles, germs, or chemicals out.



#### A hood or specialized headgear

This protective head covering is connected to a PAPR system. It also protects the head and face from harmful particles, germs, or chemicals.



#### A fluid-resistant gown

This is additional layer of clothing worn over hospital scrubs to prevent blood or body fluids from soaking through or contacting skin.

After your care team assesses you, they will share more information about your care plan with you and your loved ones. Your care team welcomes your questions. They can help provide support with your emotional or mental well-being, and to help with communication between you, your family, caregivers and support persons.

### For family member or support persons:

If your loved one is receiving care under special precautions:

- Do not enter restricted areas unless a health care worker says it's safe.
- The care team will explain your loved one's condition and the care they are receiving.
- The care team will tell you when visits are allowed and what safety measures you need to follow, such as wearing protective equipment, and cleaning your hands.
- You can speak directly with the care team for updates and guidance.