

Quick Tips for the Dental Office

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

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All employers must display an OSHA poster (Publication 3165) where it can be seen by all employees. The poster explains workers' rights to a safe workplace. Copies of the poster can be downloaded or ordered at no cost from OSHA's website at www.osha.gov.

The three OSHA standards that are cited most often in the dental office are the **Bloodborne Pathogens Standard**, the **Hazard Communications Standard** and the **General Safety Standard**.

Bloodborne Pathogens Standard

Sets the standard for office procedures to prevent occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens in the dental office. Major components of the standard include:

- A written Exposure Control Plan
- Exposure determination to identify employees covered by the bloodborne pathogens standard
- Utilization of universal precautions to prevent contact from blood and other potentially infectious materials involved in patient care
- Appropriate use of personal protective equipment
- Use of Center for Disease Control Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health Care Settings as the standard for proper infection control practices in the office
- Hepatitis B vaccination for all employees at risk for occupational exposure
- Medical records for employees at risk for occupational exposure, including information about the employee's hepatitis B vaccination status and any exposure incident reports
- Training staff at the time of initial assignment as well as whenever changes in task occur, increasing risk for potential occupational exposure



Hazard Communications Standard

Sets the standard for a Hazard Communication Program including:

- Lists of all hazardous chemicals known to be present in the office
 - All products subject to OSHA labeling requirements must include the manufacturer's name and address, the identity of the hazardous chemicals and appropriate hazard warnings
 - Keeping material data sheets on file for each hazardous chemical present in the office and making them accessible to all employees
 - Training staff at the time of initial assignment as well as whenever changes in tasks occur, or new hazards are added, increasing risk of employee exposure to hazardous chemicals
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General Safety Standard

Outlines general safety requirements including:

- Keeping employee medical and exposure records on file
- Having an emergency action plan in place to protect employees in case of fire or other emergencies, which includes alarm systems, escape procedures and routes that are clearly marked and accessible in case of emergency; procedures to account for all employees post evacuation and rescue; and medical duties of employees who may perform them and how to report fires and other emergencies
- Having a fire prevention plan, including making sure the office is equipped with a properly operating sprinkler system, fire detection and alarm system and fire extinguishers
- Inspection of any compressed gas cylinders for defects, proper storage away from sources of heat or in areas they could be damaged, closed valves on empty cylinders and protection caps are placed on cylinders not in use
- Having at least one employee trained in first aid if there is no hospital or medical services in proximity to the office and that first aid supplies are readily available
- Machines that expose employees to rotating parts, nip points, flying chips and sparks of other hazards are adequately guarded and that protective eyewear is used when needed to guard against potential hazards
- Electrical outlets and appliances are properly grounded, extension cords have a grounded conductor, wiring and cords that are frayed or deteriorated are repaired or replaced immediately, receptacles installed in a wet or damp location are suitable for the location or otherwise protected

Training

OSHA training must be conducted **annually** and also whenever employees take on a new task or responsibility that potentially exposes them to workplace hazards to which they were not previously exposed. Training is very informal and can easily be done in office by a staff member knowledgeable on OSHA regulations. Documentation for any training completed must be kept for at least three years.

Training needs to include reviews of the three standards outlined above and should specifically address:

- General information about the epidemiology and symptoms of bloodborne diseases
- Modes of transmission of bloodborne pathogens
- Explanation of the exposure control plan
- How to recognize tasks involving occupational exposure
- Where PPE is located in the office and when/how to use it, remove it and dispose of it
- Hepatitis B vaccines (effectiveness, safety and benefits)
- What to do if there is an emergency spill of blood or other potentially infectious matter
What to do if an exposure incident occurs
- Post exposure evaluation and follow up
- The system used to warn employees against biohazards
- Operations in employee work areas involving hazardous chemicals
- How to detect the presence or release of hazardous chemicals in the work area
- Physical and health hazards of chemicals in the work area
- How employees can protect themselves from these hazards
- How to use safety data sheets and where they are kept in the office
- Labeling system used in the office to warn employees against hazardous chemicals