



TITLE OF POLICY

Student Exposure Policy

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the methods of prevention and procedures to address medical student exposure to infectious and environmental hazards and to describe the mechanisms and resources for determining the effects of infectious and environmental disease or disability on medical student learning activities.

RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE

The Office of Student Affairs and Campus Health will review the policy on an as-needed basis and the Education Committee will approve it.

LCME REFERENCE(S)

Standard 12.8: Student Exposure Policies/Procedures

HISTORY OF APPROVALS AND UPDATES

Approved by Education Committee on December 16, 2019

Amended and Approved by Education Committee on March 15, 2021

Amended and Approved by Education Committee on November 17, 2025

DEFINITION(S):

For the purpose of this policy, *environmental diseases* refer to noninfectious acute disorders associated with environmental exposures such as chemical or thermal burns or physical injuries such as falls.

Financial responsibility refers to the monetary cost of coverage for prophylactic and other post-exposure measures.

POLICY

Methods of Prevention

The School of Medicine (SOM) oversees the following measures of prevention:

- Immunizations: In order to reduce the risk of medical students of being exposed to infectious diseases, medical students must be immunized as required by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina law, the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, and UNC Health.
- N95 Mask Fit Testing: Medical students are also required to be fit tested for an N95 mask respirator during the first semester of medical school. Students who are not in compliance with this requirement are pulled from courses and/or activities that would place them at risk.
- Training: The UNC Office of Environment, Health and Safety and the SOM require medical students to complete annual training in infection prevention, bloodborne pathogens, and tuberculosis awareness.

- First-year student Orientation: Students receive a laminated card with a QR code linking to a website containing information on Exposure Protocol for Central and all regional campuses.
- Transition to Application Phase Course: All medical students entering the clinical portion of the curriculum attend a lecture in the first week of the third year about infection control issues, including the prevention of exposure to infectious and environmental hazards. Students assigned to the Central, Asheville, Charlotte, and Wilmington Campuses are given instructions on handling exposure to infectious and environmental hazards during this orientation.
- Annual Reminders and Publication of Procedures: Medical students receive annual email reminders about each campus' needlestick procedures and bloodborne pathogen exposure procedures. Additionally, policies and procedures are posted in each course's learning management system site and on the School of Medicine's Student Affairs learning management system site. Students in Individualization Phase complete a required orientation module reviewing these policies in each selective course.

Procedures for Care and Treatment after Exposure

Campus Health (CH) at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill functions as the occupational health care provider for medical students at Central Campus with a home based in Chapel Hill. The occupational health care providers at Wake Med (Raleigh) and Cone Health (Greensboro) serve other Central-Cross Regional Students. The occupational health care providers at Mission Hospital (Asheville campus), Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center (Charlotte), and Novant Health New Hanover Regional Medical Center (Wilmington) serve medical students at those campuses.

Bloodborne exposures: Medical students are required to have completed a full Hepatitis B vaccination series and furnish a titer to prove immunity by the end of their first semester. Students who have potentially been exposed to Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), or other blood borne pathogens should follow the exposure control plan for bloodborne pathogens for their site (see, for example, the UNC Campus Health Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Protocol).

Tuberculosis exposure: Upon matriculation, medical students are required to have completed either a two-step tuberculin skin test (TST) or interferon-gamma release assay (IGRA) blood test and must complete an annual self-screening attestation. Students who have tested positive for TB are evaluated at either Campus Health, if they are rotating in a Central Campus site (Chapel Hill, Greensboro, or Raleigh), UNC Asheville's Health and Counseling Center, UNC Charlotte's Student Health Center, or UNC Wilmington's Student Health Services, depending on the student's location, to determine whether the student has latent TB or active TB.

Financial Responsibility for Care and Treatment

The costs associated with evaluation and management of blood borne or airborne exposure, including medications associated with post-exposure prophylaxis, are typically covered by the student's health insurance plan. The cost of medical care is typically the responsibility of the student. Students are required to furnish proof of a valid health insurance plan annually to the School of Medicine's compliance platform. Health shares do not typically cover treatment following pathogen exposure and therefore are not valid as the sole insurance plan for medical students. UNC SOM students should use the pharmacy benefit of their health insurance plan to pay for medications but may be reimbursed for the cost of the medication with documentation.



Regional campuses: Medical students who are on rotation at a site greater than one hour away from the Chapel Hill campus will be managed per the occupational health system in place at that institution. Students are given information regarding the management of bloodborne pathogen exposure during their orientation to the site. The costs of the initial evaluation and management of a blood borne pathogen exposure at the Asheville, Charlotte, and Wilmington campuses is typically covered by their respective occupational health offices for the source patient. In some circumstances, the source patient's insurance may pay for source patient testing. The cost of medical care is typically the responsibility of the student. All costs associated with medications used for post exposure prophylaxis are typically filed using the pharmacy benefit of the student's health insurance plan, but UNC SOM students may be reimbursed for the cost of medications with documentation. In all cases, the exposure should be reported to the UNC Chapel Hill CHS for tracking purposes and when needed, to assist in the case.

Effects of Infectious and/or Environmental Disease or Disability on Educational Activities

Infectious Diseases

Bloodborne pathogens: Students with HIV, hepatitis B, or other blood borne infections will be evaluated according to the Healthcare Personnel Who Are Infected With Hepatitis B Virus, Hepatitis C Virus, and/or Human Immunodeficiency Virus policy which can be found at <https://policies.unc.edu/TDClient/2833/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=132570>.

TB: Students with latent TB may participate in patient care activities without restriction but may wish to consult with a health care professional regarding treatment as studies have shown that treatment can reduce the incidence of disease progression. Students with active TB should be treated and placed in isolation and will not be allowed to participate in clinical activities until they are determined to no longer be infectious. The student may be referred to an infectious disease specialist.

Covid-19 and other viral respiratory infections: Regarding in-person instruction and patient care, students with Covid-19 and other respiratory infections will follow the guidelines of UNC Health if at Central campus or the hospital or clinic to which they are assigned if at another campus or site.

Underlying Disease or Disability

Students with underlying disease or disability should contact the University Compliance Office (<https://eoc.unc.edu/accommodations/>) regarding accommodations, if applicable. The School of Medicine Office of Student Affairs will work with the student and UCO to determine the impact, if any, on the student's learning activities in either the classroom or clinical environment.