



**ROUTINE**

AT INDIGENOUS HEALING CEREMONIES

**PRACTICES**

*The leaders and helpers at ceremonies, like the Sundance, have created this brochure to inform healers, helpers, dancers, and those who participate in healing ceremonies.*

## **Routine Practices are the basic steps taken to protect people from exposure** to infections in many kinds of community settings.

They are based on the assumption that all blood and body fluids may contain infectious diseases. The Spruce Woods Sundance Family recommends routine practices be followed in order to keep people healthy and to ensure that healing ceremonies can include those that are immune compromised or living with HIV and hepatitis. It is important to recognize that people do not need to know whether they have HIV or hepatitis in order to participate.

### **WHAT PARTICIPANTS NEED TO KNOW:**

- **EVERYONE** will be treated the same. Following routine practices means you do not need to know or disclose your status in order to participate.
- Your piercer and helper must wear a new pair of gloves for each person, for the piercing, flesh offering, and wound care.
- Your piercer must use a new scalpel or needle for your piercing.
- Avoid touching open wounds and allowing other people to touch your wounds.
- Do not share items exposed to the blood of another person (ex. ropes or pegs). Talk to your piercer before re-using pegs.
- Those at-risk for infections should consult their health care provider before participating in certain ceremonies.

### **HIV CAN NOT BE CONTRACTED THROUGH THE FOLLOWING METHODS:**

- Talking, shaking hands, cigarettes
- Working alongside someone with HIV
- Hugs or kisses
- Coughs or sneezes
- Donating blood
- Swimming pools
- Toilet seats or water fountains
- Bed sheets or towels
- Forks, spoons, cups, food
- Insects or animals

*Although medication is available, there is no vaccine or cure once you become infected with HIV. It is a lifelong infection.*

*You can get hepatitis C (HCV) from sharing anything with blood on it, even if you can't see the blood. The virus is strong and lives longer than HIV. In certain cases HCV is treatable and curable. You can get HCV more than once. There is no vaccine for HCV.*

### **IF YOU HAVE AN ACCIDENTAL NEEDLE POKE OR CUT YOURSELF WITH A USED SCALPEL:**

- Encourage bleeding at the injured area
- Wash area with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub
- If splashed to eyes/mouth/nose, flush with water.
- Contact Health Links at 204-788-8200 for advice on medical treatment.

*Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). PEP is available if you are exposed to HIV positive blood. If you do not know the status of the blood, you can still access PEP. Go directly to emergency service. PEP is most effective at preventing HIV transmission within the first 24 hours of exposure.*

# ROUTINE

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# PRACTICES

Healing ceremonies have been a part of Indigenous societies for thousands of years. Just as infections and illnesses have evolved worldwide, so have Indigenous approaches to healing ceremonies. As with other peoples, Indigenous people are also affected by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and viral hepatitis, which are transmitted through body fluids, which includes blood-to-blood transmission. While the risk is considered low for HIV and hepatitis transmission during healing ceremonies in which blood is present, prevention procedures are important.

## **IF YOU HAVE OPEN CUTS OR SORES ON YOUR HANDS DO NOT ASSIST WITH PIERCING.**

**WORK SURFACES:** Work surfaces can be cleaned using a general tattooing or acupuncture disinfectant such as PerCept wipes. If disinfectants are not available, a solution of 1 part bleach and 9 parts water can be used.

Note: Bleach solutions are not considered effective in sterilizing scalpels and other instruments.

**PUNCTURE-PROOF CONTAINER:** It is important to have access to a puncture-proof container to dispose of used scalpels, needles, gloves, and other contaminated items. Do not leave the containers where someone could get exposed to the contents. A SHARPS container or Javex bottles are examples of a puncture proof container.

## **PEGS:**

- Ensure that each participant has their own pegs.
- If participants want to re-use their pegs or someone else's pegs ensure they are aware of the risks. There are risks to re-using pegs as well as using other peoples pegs, including virus transmission and bacterial infections.

## **GLOVES:**

- Use latex, polyurethane or vinyl gloves when piercing, taking flesh offerings, and providing wound care.
- Use a new pair of gloves with each participant.
- Use precaution when using sharp instruments or needles. Gloves function as a barrier, they cannot prevent needle pokes (sticks) or scalpel cuts (lacerations).
- If gloves are not available, wash hands between contact with each participant in a solution that is at least 60% alcohol-based.
- Place used gloves and other contaminated materials in plastic bag or a puncture proof container when done.
- Consult with your local Public Health facility, nursing station or Regional Health Authority for the recommended procedure to properly dispose of these items.

## **SCALPEL AND NEEDLES:**

- Use a new scalpel or needle on each participant.
- Dispose of all used scalpels and needles in puncture-proof containers.

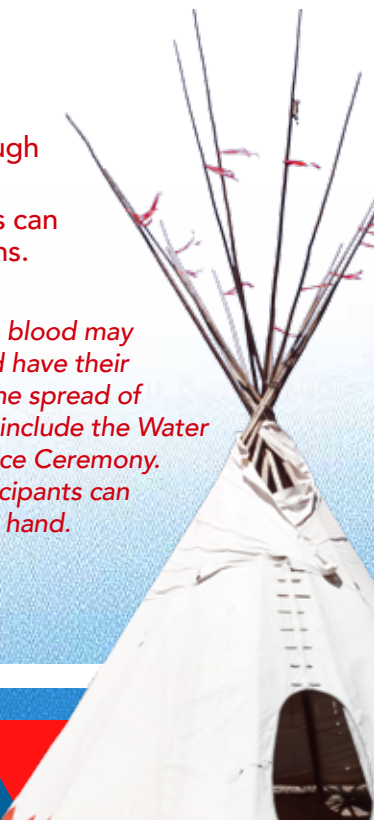
## **WOUND TREATMENT:**

- Ensure you or the helper are wearing gloves that have only been exposed to this participant.
- Treat wound with traditional medicines such as tobacco.
- Prevent and discourage any other direct contact with the open wound(s). An open wound is an opportunity for contamination and transmission of infections.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Be careful if the skin breaks.
- Watch for pegs breaking through and flying across the lodge.
- Eye protection and face masks can be used as additional precautions.

*At other healing ceremonies where blood may not be present, each person should have their own cups and utensils to prevent the spread of infections such as the flu. This may include the Water Ceremony, Berry Ceremony, and Rice Ceremony. If only one utensil is available, participants can scoop the berries or rice onto their hand.*





**SPRUCE WOODS**  
SUNDANCE FAMILY

**PRESENTED IN  
COLLABORATION WITH:**

