

Working safely with laboratory animals

Risks when working with laboratory animals

1. Bites and scratches

Even calm or quiet animals can cause injuries when anxious or in pain. The ability to predict an animal's behavior can change without any warning.

- ✚ Take appropriate training on ways to hold and restrain the animals, according to the procedures being performed.
- ✚ Ensure that you know the proper treatment in case of a bite/scratch from an animal, and the location of the first aid kit.

2. Allergies

One of the most common problems when working with lab animals is an allergy, which is caused by being exposed to allergens from the animals.

- ✚ The risk of developing an allergy depends on a variety of parameters, such as the type of animal, purpose and nature of the work room/facility, ventilation and the lab worker's state of health.

Signs of an allergy:

- ✚ Skin redness, scratching or itching;
- ✚ Sneezing, runny nose (clear);
- ✚ Asthma: coughing, gasping or shortness of breath;
- ✚ And more...

You can prevent developing an allergy by wearing a long lab coat, gloves, protective goggles and a breathing mask, **all of which are means for avoiding skin and respiratory exposure.**

Procedures for working safely:

- ❖ Become familiar with the risk factors to which you could be exposed. Read and understand the procedures for working with animals and the appropriate risk factor. Read the MSDS sheets for the materials you will be working with.
- ❖ Do not eat, drink, smoke, apply makeup or insert contact lenses in the work room/laboratory.

- ❖ Wear protective gear: Gloves, long lab coat, closed shoes, protective goggles and respiratory protection (N99) or mask when necessary (especially for procedures performed outside of a biological fume hood).
- ❖ Wash hands with soap and water:
 - ✚ When work is completed;
 - ✚ After discovering a tear in a glove;
 - ✚ When working with pathogenic or chemical agents, change gloves frequently.
- ❖ When working with Level 2 risk factors or chemical agents, wear gloves.
- ❖ Clean up spills immediately with a fresh and diluted (1:10) bleach solution.
- ❖ Wherever possible avoid using sharp implements (use single-use plastic implements instead).
- ❖ Do not return needles to their sheath. Dispose of the entire syringe in the sharp waste container.
- ❖ Remove biological waste when work is completed.
- ❖ Cytotoxic materials, or biologicals that are contaminated with cytotoxic materials, must be disposed of in a cytotoxic waste container (green bags). Remember, the biological agents must be neutralized before being removed as cytotoxic waste.

