



### **How can I reduce the risk of exposure through skin wounds?**

Most occupational infections occur through the skin (percutaneous exposure). These include incidents such as needlesticks and bite wounds or scratches. Accordingly, eliminate the use of sharp objects whenever possible. When syringe use is necessary, consider self-sheathing or retractable needle technologies. Immediately after use, dispose of all sharps into the provided puncture-resistant sharps containers. Learning appropriate methods of handling and restraining research animals will help prevent bites or scratches. Contact the Office of Animal Welfare (982-4092) for information on animal handling workshops.



### **When should I wear gloves?**

In order to minimize your exposure to animal allergens and biological agents, protective gloves must be worn whenever you handle animals or soiled bedding. Use a new pair of gloves each time you start a new task. Gloves should also be promptly changed once they have become visibly contaminated with an animal's blood, bodily excretions, or visibly lose their integrity. After you have completed your work, remove the gloves and thoroughly wash your hands for 15-30 seconds with soap and warm water. Hand washing, even after wearing protective gloves, is the single most effective means of infection control.



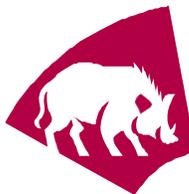
### **How can I minimize the risk of inhalation exposure?**

All activities must be carefully performed to minimize the creation of splashes or airborne hazards. Procedures likely to generate spills, splashes, sprays, or aerosols that might contain hazardous materials should be conducted in a specially designated area such as a biological safety cabinet or chemical fume hood. When such equipment is unavailable, you must use appropriate respiratory and personal protective equipment (e.g., goggles, face shields, etc.).



### **What is appropriate respiratory protection?**

Respirators that meet the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration's standards are appropriate. Consult your supervisor or Environmental Health and Safety for information about obtaining and using such a respirator. Surgical masks, which are designed to protect animals from exposure to human contaminants, will not protect you from animal allergens or infectious agents. Masks are not appropriate respiratory protection.



### **What other protective equipment is available?**

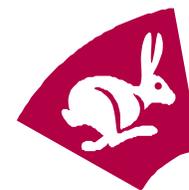
Uniforms, gowns or laboratory coats are available and must be used to prevent contamination of street clothes. Protective clothing must not be worn outside the work area.

Protective face and eyewear is available and should be worn when the eyes, nose, or mouth might be exposed to splashes or splatters from potentially hazardous agents. When entering areas where non-human primates are housed or working with non-human primates, you must use a respirator, eye protection, hair cover, gloves, gown, and shoe covers at all times.



### **Are there other general guidelines?**

- Do not smoke, handle contact lenses, or apply cosmetics in areas where animals are housed or handled.
- Eat, drink, and store your food only in areas specially designated and used for these purposes. No food or drink may be brought into the work area.
- Decontaminate work surfaces after use and after spills of any potentially infectious material.
- The use of hazardous chemicals requires specific cage and room labeling. For instructions or questions regarding the safe use and disposal of hazardous materials, please contact Environmental Health & Safety.



### **What should I do if I am exposed?**

All exposures, injuries, bites and scratches, needlesticks, spills, accidents, etc. should be immediately reported to your supervisor. Medical treatment is available through UVA-WorkMed or Student Health Services. On weekends and holidays, and during afterhours of the workweek, you should seek treatment at the hospital emergency room and report the incident to your supervisor the very next working day.



### **Important Contacts for the Occupational Health Program**

*UVA-WorkMed:* 243-0075

*Student Health:* 924-5362

*Environmental Health & Safety:*  
982-4911

*Animal Care & Use Committee:*  
924-0405

*Center for Comparative Medicine:*  
243-9390

*University Human Resources:*  
924-4598

The Occupational Health Program is jointly administered by UVA- WorkMed and Student Health, in consultation with representatives of University Human Resources, Comparative Medicine, the Office of Animal Welfare, the ACUC, and Environmental Health and Safety.

For more information about the program, visit [our website](#).

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## **EXPOSURE CONTROL PRACTICES FOR ANIMAL HANDLERS: Protecting Your Health**



**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM**

***E***xposure Control Practices are routine measures that animal handlers follow to reduce occupational exposure to infectious, allergenic, toxic, and/or biohazardous agents encountered during animal care and use. It is imperative that personnel who handle animals understand the risk of exposure associated with the procedures that they perform. If you are uncertain of the risks associated with your work and the appropriate precautions to take, check with your supervisor or consult with *Environmental Health and Safety*.