TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Social Distancing in Research Laboratories

Environmental Health & Safety Factsheet • risk@twu.edu • (940) 268-3473

STAY HOME IF YOU GET SICK.

Lab members should remain home if they are sick. Individuals who are sick and come to campus can spread infection to their colleagues and compromise research.

MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING.

Maintain distance between lab members. Six feet of distance between individuals, recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is the best standard to apply. In addition, ***face coverings must be worn at all times indoors, unless alone in private areas***.

Task	Recommendations
Benchtop work in open lab areas	Assign members to alternating bench stations or have members work in different parts of the laboratory. Generally, try to keep individuals physically separated by ≥6 feet. Wear face coverings.
Work in small room (≥6 feet between workers impossible)	Restrict rooms where members cannot consistently be ≥6 feet apart to only one person at a time. Wear face coverings.
Work in biosafety cabinets, hoods, and other specialty equipment	Lab members should not work at directly adjacent stations. Stagger schedules/stations to maintain social distancing.
Non-hazardous lab tasks	Whenever possible, move non-hazardous and non-research tasks into offices and other available non-lab areas (e.g., labeling empty sample tubes, unpacking equipment). Wear face coverings.
Maintaining critical operations	Consider assigning lab members to teams or rotating shifts so that illness in one group is less likely to spread to other lab workers and impact lab operations. Wear face coverings.
Lab meetings, data analysis, literature review, proposal editing	Work that can be accomplished outside of the lab should be conducted remotely whenever possible.
Hazardous lab tasks	Follow TWU's Chemical Hygiene Plan, including procedures for working alone (periodic checks in person, via text, web conferencing, etc.)

PPE, HAND WASHING, AND DISINFECTING SURFACES.

Many normal lab practices double as effective infection control measures:

- Consistent glove use provides a good reminder to workers not to touch their face. Ensure that lab members continue to wear the same PPE they use in normal circumstances. Due to supply shortages, use PPE when necessary but be mindful of unnecessary waste or usage.
- Routine hand washing, especially after taking off gloves, prevents lab members from spreading contamination from experiments or illness onto clean surfaces.
- Disinfectants that are effective in preserving a sterile work surface will also inactivate COVID-19. Expand normal disinfection protocols to include frequently contacted surfaces (e.g. computer equipment, doorknobs, switches, refrigerator handles, pipettors, hood sashes, etc.).