Laboratory Animal Allergies Statement

Prolonged exposure to animal allergens in the workplace may lead to Laboratory Animal Allergies (LAA). Up to one third of laboratory animal workers have allergies to lab animals, and up to one sixth have symptomatic asthma. Inhalation is the most common route for allergens to enter someone’s body. Also, the skin, eyes, and respiratory system can be affected. Usually, sensitization occurs within the first three years of working with laboratory animals. Once sensitized, the person’s next exposure to that allergen will cause an allergic reaction. People who have allergies to domestic animals are more likely to develop allergies to laboratory animals. Common symptoms of an allergic reaction are listed below. Protecting yourself from being exposed to animal allergens will decrease your risk of acquiring laboratory animal allergies.

Symptoms of allergic reaction:
- Itchy, watery eyes
- Itchy, runny nose
- Chest tightness
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath

Sources of allergens from Animals:
- Fur
- Dander
- Feces or urine
- Saliva
- Serum

Preventing LAA’s:
- Do not wear street cloths while working with animals and leave work clothes at the workplace to be laundered.
- Keep cages and animals clean.
- Reduce skin contact of animals and their allergens by wearing proper personal protective equipment, including gloves, lab coat, eye protection, dust mask, scrubs, hairnet, and other PPE.
- Reduce the amount of animal allergens you are inhaling by wearing a respirator (please see the Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator about respirator use and Environmental Health and Safety for medical clearance, fit testing, and training.
- Wash your hands after exiting animal rooms.
- Spend as little time as possible in rooms where animals are kept.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke in rooms where animals are housed.
- Moisten empty soiled cages or use a micro-isolation top before transport.
- Empty dirty cages into the mobile dumping station in the cage wash room.
- Shower after working with animals (when needed).
- Participate in training about animal allergies and how to reduce your risk.
- Contact The Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator at 414-288-6206 for more information on the risk assessment and questionnaire.
- Contact Environmental Health and Safety at 414-288-8411 for more information about the Respiratory Protection program.

SYMPTOMS?
CALL THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COORDINATOR AT 414-288-6206

References: