

University of Massachusetts/Amherst Occupational Health Program for Handling Non-Human Primates



There are some potential occupational hazards associated with the use of non-human primates and there is a need to take precautions to minimize the potential for animal-to-human zoonotic disease. Also of concern is possible disease transmission from human to animal.

Gloves, masks and a laboratory coat (or other dedicated protective clothing such as arm protection and/or a scrub suit) should be worn when working with non-human primates. In some cases protective eye wear is also indicated. Do not eat, drink, or apply cosmetics while working in an animal use area, and always wash your hands after handling primates. Remember that unfixed tissues, blood, serum, urine, and other materials derived from primates may also pose a risk. Bedding and fur may exacerbate allergies.

Contact Barbara Miller at 545-0668 with any concerns or questions you have about working with non-human primates or any vertebrate animal and occupational risks. Help with training personnel in specific work practices to minimize risk is also obtained by contacting Barbara.

Non-human primates raised in “clean” facilities are relatively free of zoonotic diseases unless they have been experimentally or accidentally infected with a human pathogen. A broad variety of non-human primate diseases are transmissible to humans. Tuberculosis can be transmitted from primates to humans and vice versa. TB testing is performed regularly in primate colonies and in personnel working with these species. Humans and other primates share a broad range of gastrointestinal microorganisms and parasites. These include *Campylobacter*, *Shigella*, *Salmonella*, *Giardia*, or *Trichuris* which are commonly spread via the fecal/oral route. Rhesus and other macaques can carry Herpes B and the carriers may be asymptomatic.

Bites and scratches involving non-human primates or injuries from objects contaminated with body fluids from non-human primates require immediate first aid and medical attention.

If you feel sick or are injured and concerned it might be related to your work with primates, notify your supervisor!

During the hours of 9:00 to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday you can call, or go to, University Health Services (413) 577-5000.

For immediate life threatening injuries dial 911 or go to the nearest Emergency facility (e.g., Cooley Dickinson Hospital, phone (413) 582-2000). University Health Services is not an emergency facility.