

## **LABORATORY ALLERGY POLICY**

### **1.0 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this written policy is the prevention of allergic reactions to animals and/or latex while at Simmons College (Simmons). These allergies can result in potentially serious health problems for employees and students who are often unaware of the risk of exposure. The reaction may occur within minutes to hours after contact and produce a variety of symptoms. Symptoms include skin rash and irritation, respiratory irritation, asthma, and severe shock that can be life threatening. Such health problems can be minimized or prevented by following the recommendations in this Policy.

### **2.0 RISK AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **2.1 Animals**

Most laboratory animal allergens are small acidic extracellular glycoproteins called lipocalins. They are carried on small particles that are capable of remaining airborne. The proteins frequently associated with allergic reactions are found in animals' urine, saliva, and dander. Most allergies will develop within the first year of exposure, and it is uncommon for people to develop allergies many years after exposure. As a result, contact with animals, their secretions, excretions, bedding, and feed place employees and students at risk for developing an allergic reaction to laboratory animals.

To help prevent development of animal allergies, Simmons will investigate using one of the following methods to control exposure:

- Environmental - Negative pressure environments, local exhaust ventilation, ventilated equipment, filter -topped cages, downdraft tables
- Administrative - Minimize animal use to extent feasible, training and education of workers, restricted access to animal rooms, limit animal use to the animal facility, restrict contaminated personal protective equipment (PPE) to animal facility
- Work Practices - Limiting animal density, work process design to reduce animal handling, wet preparation for shaving, room cleaning procedures that minimize exposure, hand washing
- PPE - Respirators, gloves, shoe covers, hair covers, protective clothing: lab coats, gowns, or Tyvek

#### **2.2 Latex**

Persons with ongoing latex exposure are at risk for developing latex allergy. They include employees and students, who frequently use latex gloves and other latex-containing medical supplies. Employees and students who use latex gloves and other products less frequently may also develop latex allergy. Latex allergy is also associated with allergies to certain foods especially avocado, potato, banana, tomato, chestnuts, kiwi fruit, and papaya. People with spina bifida are also at increased risk for latex allergy.

To prevent latex allergies, Simmons' departments will:

- Work toward a latex-safe environment.
- Change over to non-latex products whenever possible.



- Provide a selection of non-latex gloves and other products made of nitrile, neoprene, vinyl or other material to employees and students.
- Provide non-latex gloves to workers allergic to latex.
- Ensure that workers use good housekeeping practices to remove latex-containing dust from the workplace by frequent wet sponging or disinfecting of areas such as laboratory bench tops.
- Encourage prevention strategies whenever someone is diagnosed with latex allergy.

### 3.0 PROCESS

If you have a known allergy to animals and/or latex or you suspect that you may be developing an animal and/or latex allergy, below is the process.

1. Consult your primary care physician (PCP) or an occupational health medical provider (OHMP) about treatment and precautions. Please have the PCP or OHMP provide you with a summary of the precautions (e.g., PPE requirements), if applicable, for Simmons' implementation.
2. Notify the appropriate people about your allergy:
  - a. Employees
    - i. Tell your supervisor and the Talent and Human Capital Strategy Department (THCS).
    - ii. Provide THCS with a copy of your medical evaluation.
    - iii. Provide the Director of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) with a copy of the precautions.
  - b. Students
    - i. Tell your supervisor, department chair, and laboratory instructors about your allergy.
    - ii. Please provide Health Services with a copy of your medical evaluation.
    - iii. Provide the Director of EH&S with a copy of the precautions.

**NOTE:** If the precautions include the use of a respirator, then contact the Director of EH&S for more information about respirator use.

3. **Carefully follow the PCP or OHMP instructions for dealing with allergic reactions.**