

To those working with fur-bearing laboratory animals (rats and mice)

Before starting work

Health check before starting work with experimental animals

Since people working with experimental animals (rats and mice) can develop allergies, we will from now on recommend and offer a dedicated health check for all those who work or will be working with experimental animals. Employees and students at UiO will therefore be invited to a health check at UiO's Occupational Health Service Unit before they start working with experimental animals:

<https://www.uio.no/english/about/organisation/los/ebht/index.html>

The health check for monitoring people working with experimental animals consists of blood tests to detect allergies, a spirometry (lung function test) and a consultation with a doctor.

The employer is responsible for making sure that employees and master students are invited to the health check – contact hms-koordinator@basalmed.uio.no if you believe that you need a health check and have not yet received an invitation for one.

Work with fur-bearing experimental animals

Not everyone develops health problems when working with fur-bearing experimental animals, but it is important to be aware of certain factors:

Allergy prevention

Working with laboratory animals is a well-known risk factor for developing allergic disorders. It is therefore important that you use the proper protective equipment/clothing in order to protect yourself against allergen exposure. Technical protection measures such as IVC cages and ventilated changing stations etc. will help to reduce allergens in the air.

Allergies can develop due to contact with the animals' urine, fur, skin cells and saliva. Soiled litter can also lead to allergies arising for example from animal urine.

The risk of exposure to allergens can be substantially reduced if you follow the adopted work and hygiene routines and instructions and use protective clothing such as a hair net, gloves and safety glasses. Use respiratory protection equipment (mask with a P3 filter or a fresh air mask) when performing tasks that can generate a lot of dust (such as cleaning and emptying cages etc.)

Infectious agents

Even healthy animals can transmit infections to humans, for example through bites and clawing. All those working with experimental animals at UiO must be given the option to have a tetanus vaccine. Employees and students at UiO can be given a tetanus vaccine at the Occupational Health Service Unit. For more information about the tetanus vaccine, please see the recommendations issued by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health.

General work routines

Try to keep dust to a minimum. Use gentle movements when working, both when handling animals and litter.

Working procedures that generate a lot of dust must be carried out in areas equipped with an LAF (laminar air flow) changing station and LAF emptying station.

Do not keep unnecessary items in the pockets of your protective clothing and avoid polluting your personal effects with animal allergens, litter and animal urine.

Always wash your hands after touching animals if you are not using gloves (use moisturizer if necessary). Rinse your face with clean water at the end of each working day.

Take as little paper etc. as possible out of the enclosed zone. Results and the like should be registered electronically or scanned inside the department.