



## Tulane University School of Medicine Laboratory Research Standard Operating Procedures Related to COVID-19

### COVID-19 GENERAL INFORMATION

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person close contact (within 6 feet). The infection occurs primarily through respiratory droplets (coughing, sneezing, talking) from an infected person, which can be inhaled into the mouths or noses of nearby people, or possibly from circulating air. Those infected with COVID-19 may be asymptomatic (not showing symptoms), and yet can still transmit the virus. The virus also readily spreads by persons touching surfaces of objects that contain the virus and then touching their own mouths, noses or eyes. The CDC considers the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus to be higher when there is “prolonged” (greater than 15 minutes) contact at a distance of less than 6’. The best methods to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are through wearing face coverings or masks (over the mouth and nose), physical distancing, proper hygiene etiquette, frequent cleaning and disinfecting. As such, the policies described below have been established to reduce transmission of COVID-19.

### CURRENT GENERAL GUIDANCE

All standard operating procedures (SOP) specific to the research laboratory will be maintained, with the addition of guidance for COVID-19 specific processes. COVID-19 guidance is dynamic and will be adapted based on the current best knowledge of virus transmissibility. Lab members will be notified of any significant changes to this SOP and the lab group will follow the latest available version of this SOP document. All laboratory members are strongly encouraged to participate in baseline [PCR testing](#) for COVID-19 as offered at no charge by the SOM to its employees.

Laboratory members should daily [self-assess](#) themselves for symptoms and not enter the laboratory/workspace if they develop symptoms of COVID-19. These symptoms include, but are not limited to, >100.4° fever, new cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, nasal congestion unrelated to allergies, new headache, body aches and pains, or diarrhea. Lab members will notify their supervisor immediately if diagnosed with active COVID-19 infection.

Cross-training of laboratory staff should be continued in the eventuality some staff are unable to work because of illness or other unforeseen circumstances. Principal Investigators and Supervisors/Managers should ensure they have access to all contact information for their lab members, and should require that all members that exhibit flu-like or COVID symptoms not come to work and to be evaluated by their healthcare provider.

### PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Physical distancing means maintaining at least 6’ distance (about 2 arms’ length) from other people outside of your home, limiting contact with others including no handshaking or embracing co-workers; and no gathering in groups larger than 10. In-house research and laboratory activities must be performed such that strict social distancing (at least 6’) guidelines are followed. Schedules for research teams are to be staggered, if 6’ distance cannot be achieved at the bench or workspace.

### WORKSPACES

The SOM Space Assessment Team and PI/Lab Supervisors have assessed research laboratories, common equipment rooms and workstations for best safe practices.

Individuals working at laboratory benches or utilizing common equipment, must maintain at least 6’ physical distance, unless specific experiments, or training, require closer proximity to each other. The amount of time lab members spend within 6’ of one another for close proximity work must be kept to the least amount of time possible.

Lab members should not work directly across from one another, unless there is at least 6 feet of distance and they are always masked.

Where workspaces cannot allow maintenance of appropriate physical distancing, other measures must be put into place to reduce contact (staggered work schedules or physical barriers).

Zoom-type meetings should be widely utilized. Social or physical distancing of at least 6' between individuals must be maintained in all gatherings. In person meetings of more than 10 persons are prohibited, and all meetings must adhere to social distancing guidelines.

### **PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

Face coverings or masks should be worn by lab members any time they are in a workspace shared with others, in all common areas such as elevators or lobbies, and when entering and exiting campus buildings. Face coverings should be appropriately worn to cover the nose and mouth, and fit snugly against the face. Face coverings or masks can be worn with other protective gear that may be needed, depending on experiments being performed, as per Office of Environmental Health and Safety (OEHS) and Office of Biosafety guidelines (e.g., goggles, face shields). Lab members will not wear face coverings while working with substances that may react with the material of the face covering.

Lab members should be reminded that personal protective equipment (PPE) specific to lab work (gloves, face shields, lab coats) should not be worn in non-lab spaces. Therefore, such items will be removed before leaving the lab, and lab members must wash hands each time they leave the lab.

Any PPE that is not disposable will be disinfected daily.

### **REPETITIVE DISINFECTION**

Shared instruments and equipment will be cleaned and disinfected between uses, including shared tools (pipettes, tweezers, spatulas, etc.). Laboratory equipment, benches, and workstations are to be disinfected daily, and prior to exiting work areas. Frequently touched surfaces should be wiped down often – workstations, computers, telephones, etc. Kleenex, disposable sanitizing wipes and hand sanitizer should be available at all times.

If an area has a person who tests positive for COVID-19, the space will become quarantined and ServPro will be called to do a deep decontamination within an anticipated turnaround of 2 hours. Alternatively, the internal Tulane cleaning team will re-sanitize the area.

### **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF LAB MEMBER**

- Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol when hand washing is not possible. Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout all campus buildings.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Cover coughs and sneezes, and throw away used tissues and immediately wash hands.
- Take advantage of the free on-site [COVID-19 testing](#).
- [Self-screen](#) at home every day and remain at home if you have any symptoms. Supervisors are to send home any employee who comes to work with symptoms.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Additional information regarding COVID-19 guidance, may be found at:

<https://medicine.tulane.edu/>

<https://medicine.tulane.edu/research-covid-19-information>

<https://tulane.edu/covid-19/>

<https://risk.tulane.edu/oehs>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

<http://ldh.la.gov/coronavirus/>