



## **Guidelines for a partial reactivation of laboratory research activities at UA**

May 10, 2020

### Introduction

We continue to acquire new information about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and its spread, but the months ahead remain filled with considerable uncertainty. Current trends indicate that this uncertainty is likely to extend to a prolonged event. This has significant implications about raising the level of research activity in research labs, because doing so will likely take place over a time when social/physical distancing still needs to be practiced to avoid rampant spread of the virus and a renewed crisis. Governor DeWine has presented a phased plan to “reopen” Ohio, and UA is working to better understand the Governor’s intent so that we can provide guidance related to getting back to the business of being a University in the framework of continued social/physical distancing.

Guidelines about how this can be accomplished related to benchtop research are discussed below. This guidance applies to UA faculty/staff/students. We welcome any comments.

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### Guidelines

1. **Remote and On-Campus Work.** Faculty may attest that they voluntarily intend to return to UA to conduct necessary laboratory-based research on a “need to be there” basis. Up to two laboratory staff members in each lab may be identified and voluntarily agree to support the faculty member and their research on a “need to be there” basis in any given time period (although this might be done over two consecutive “shifts” so that more work could be done). Face masks must be worn when in the same room with others, daily disinfecting must be conducted, and physical distancing must be maintained. This guidance is not intended to replace work that can be done remotely. Laboratory and office occupancy should be held only to the necessary minimum.
  - a. All group meetings, project discussions and seminars should continue to be conducted remotely.

- b. As needed, returning faculty and staff may occupy their offices for limited times with their office doors closed. Only one person may be in the office at a time, and a mask should be worn and proper physical distancing should be maintained when there is a risk of encountering other people.

2. **Limits on laboratory personnel numbers.** Social/physical distancing guidelines recommend separation distances of 6 ft or more. We recommend that no more than two persons per 200 sq. ft. of lab space be allowed in a lab at any one time. Individual PIs can request exceptions to these limits but they must be approved by their department chair and your Dean. The use of procedure rooms (e.g., tissue culture suites, animal surgery suites, etc.) throughout the Vivarium and other buildings should be limited to one person at a time, if at all possible, and scheduled in advance with sheets posted on the outside of lab doors that list all approved researchers for that room. Also, rooms must be disinfected daily during work times.

Minimize, as far as possible, lab procedures requiring more than one person in close proximity. If more than one person is required in less than 100 square feet of area, the individuals involved should wear PPE (masks, gloves and eye protection) and treat each other as if they have COVID-19 but are asymptomatic.

3. **Implementation of shifts.** As noted earlier, if necessary, shift schedules can be considered to ensure social distancing—while maintaining improved productivity. Shifts are probably best organized within individual labs, but should be coordinated with other units within building or building floor (this needs to be approved by the Provost with interaction with the academic Deans).
4. **Limits on office use and occupancy.** As noted above, office work should continue to take place at remote locations (at home). For those engaged in laboratory work, and for rare research tasks requiring access to individual offices, office occupation should be limited to one person. For office spaces larger than 200 sq.ft., exceptions may be possible, but need to be pre-approved by the Provost in conjunction with Vice Presidents, Deans or Department Chairs. Doors must remain closed when offices are occupied.
5. **PPE requirements.** Face masks are required in all common areas (hallways, restrooms, break areas). Face masks must be worn in public and any time there is more than one person in a given space, including times of brief interaction between co-workers or friends—this holds anytime another person is within six feet. (Employees working alone in their office do not need to wear a mask when in that office.) Clean and disinfect personal and shared work areas (desktop, keyboards, chairs, etc.) before and after use. Treat everything as if it is contaminated. Wash hands frequently. Avoid touching face, eyes and mouth.
6. All labs are required to post signs on the outside door to the hallway identifying all approved personnel for that lab.

7. Person-to-Person research. Individual testing involving person-to-person (e.g., behavioral human testing) is not allowed at this time.
8. Recommended PPE and sanitizing practices for Research Labs

**PPE**

*Normal required PPE*

*Plus face masks*

**Sanitizing practices**

*Personal*

Wash hands on arrival

Wipe all work surfaces to be utilized with disinfectant wipes or equivalent before commencing work

After work is complete for that visit, wipe all utilized work surfaces with disinfectant wipes or equivalent

Wash hands on departure

*Room-wide*

Disinfectant mop room floor daily if not carpeted

Spray disinfectants (e.g., OdoBan) should be used for carpeted floors

Continue virtual meetings to the maximum extent possible

**Note: This memo was based on the NEOMED policy for return to work**