

**The University of Tennessee
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
Occupational Health Program**

ALLERGIES

Animal Related:

Anyone working with animals has the potential to develop an animal related allergy. People at greatest risk of developing an animal related allergy are those that have preexisting allergies, asthma, seasonal rhinitis, or eczema. The most common manifestations of animal related allergies are rhinitis (runny nose and sneezing), allergic conjunctivitis (eye irritation), dermatitis (signs related to the skin), and asthma (less common). Some allergies can be severe and life threatening. Cats, rabbits, and rodents are the most common species to cause human allergies, but any species can cause an allergy. Exposure to animal hair and skin debris are usually implicated as the cause of allergies in humans. However, allergies are also thought to be caused by urine, feces, and saliva. Most allergies will develop within the first year of exposure, and it is uncommon for people to develop allergies many years after exposure.

To help prevent development of animal allergies certain procedures should be followed. Always work in well ventilated areas, and wear protective clothing (gloves, lab coats, masks) to prevent contact with skin and inhalation of animal allergens. If a person believes they are developing an allergy, they should contact their physician for possible treatment.

Latex:

An allergy to latex can occur by repeated exposure to products that contain natural rubber latex. 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.

Anyone who is continually exposed to latex has the potential to develop a latex allergy. Latex allergies have increased in recent years, possibly due to the increased use of latex gloves in the medical industry. People who are at an increased risk to develop a latex allergy are individuals who have preexisting allergies, spina bifida, and food allergies to avocados, bananas, chestnuts, kiwi fruit, papaya, potatoes, and tomatoes.

If you suspect you may be developing a latex allergy, avoid contact with products containing latex (latex gloves, any rubber product, Band-Aids, etc.) and consult your physician about treatment and precautions.

Other Allergies

It is not unusual for individuals to be allergic to medications, certain types of food, or insect bites/stings. Personnel are encouraged to discuss with their supervisor other potential allergic reactions that may occur during work hours. Rapid and appropriate response may be lifesaving.