

Expectations for Working in Research Laboratories During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This document contains expectations for researchers returning to campus as additional University operations resume (Phase 1 and Phase 2). During these periods, precautionary measures will still be in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For the safety of themselves and those around them, all Yale faculty, trainees, staff, and essential visitors (e.g., contractors, vendors) are expected to comply with these expectations. Failure to do so will result in corrective actions. We thank you for your full cooperation.

The information in this document is intended to be generally applicable to returning to work in a research laboratory on campus. It is in addition to any specific requirements and approvals by other internal review committees, such as the IBC, IRB, YARC, IACUC, Radiation Safety Committee, Laboratory Safety Committee, or Environmental Health & Safety.

In addition to these practices for laboratories, observe the same precautions in all public spaces, such as parking lots/garages, elevators, stairways, and bathrooms.

Working alone in laboratories is not recommended, though it is recognized that certain tasks under this guidance may need to be performed by someone alone in a laboratory. If it is determined that lab staff will need to work alone, refer to the document, "[Yale University Guidelines for Working Alone in a Laboratory.](#)"

The table at the end of this document discusses requirements specific to each phase of research expansion. Reference this table for the guidance appropriate to Yale's current phase when you see a # after the guidance below. This # references the row of the table pertaining to the specific guidance.

The expectations discussed below can also be found in the training required of all employees prior to their return to campus. A link to the training will be distributed before beginning Phase 1.

Physical Distancing

- Whenever possible, conduct your work from home as required ([#3](#)).
- Maintain appropriate distancing in laboratories ([#5](#)).
- Limit on-campus staff to only those approved for access ([#1](#)) and keep staffing to the minimum necessary to perform the research ([#5](#)). Examples of how to manage staffing levels include:
 - Set up shift scheduling where small groups or cohorts of staff work alternating schedules.
 - Provide time whenever possible between each work shift to minimize overlap and allow for cleaning of the work environment at regular and appropriate intervals.
 - Never perform non-laboratory work in the laboratory.
 - Restrict laboratory visitors to only essential visitors (e.g., contractors, vendors, custodial, EHS, etc.).
- Group meetings are not allowed, and one-on-one in-person meetings should be avoided as much as possible. If one-on-one meetings must be held in person, participants should maintain the required distancing ([#5](#)) and wear PPE appropriate for common/public spaces ([#9](#)).
- When using break or lunch rooms, alternate break or lunch schedules to reduce the number of employees in the room at one time, always respecting physical distancing requirements. Eating and drinking is not allowed in laboratories. To avoid potential cross-contamination, use of shared food refrigerators in break rooms is discouraged.
- Set up a scheduling system and disinfection protocol for common equipment/dispensing areas to avoid congregating and cross-contamination in those areas.

- Avoid using coworkers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment. If sharing such equipment, spaces, furniture, or tools is necessary, clean and disinfect before and after each use.
- Where practicable, change work processes to assign specific tasks to the same person to avoid movement across laboratories. Ensure that personnel have the required training if they are performing new tasks.

Wearing Appropriate PPE

- Wear PPE as required for work in a laboratory environment ([#8](#)) or in common/public areas ([#9](#)).
- In workplace settings where employees are working alone in segregated spaces (i.e., private offices, etc.), employees may remove their masks.
- Require anybody entering the laboratory to wear a face covering.
- Current Yale University and CT guidance states that face coverings must be worn by anyone in public or in any space that is reasonably expected to be shared, including by employees while in the workplace.
- The requirement for face coverings does not apply to anyone for whom doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition. No one will be asked to provide proof of a described medical condition.
- Be aware that face coverings reduce community transmission of the virus and are not intended to provide protection for the wearer. Cloth face coverings provide a physical barrier that can help to contain the spread of respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- For laboratory work, a KN95 or other water-resistant face mask is required. Medical grade respirators (N95s or PAPRs) should be reserved for designated workers performing high-risk operations such as healthcare workers, police officers, and workers performing tasks designated high-risk. If performing a high-risk task, contact EHS for a hazard analysis.
- If a medical grade respirator is required for your work, follow the specific approved protocols for your research or contact EHS for assistance.

Practice Strict Self-Hygiene

- Self-monitor as required ([#6](#)). Recognize symptoms and self-isolate when sick.
- If you are experiencing [symptoms of COVID-19](#), or suspect you are experiencing symptoms, contact Yale Health or your health care provider for guidance.
- Stay at home whenever possible and in accordance with the work from home requirements ([#3](#)).
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow [CDC recommended precautions](#).
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water after you have been in a public place and touched an item or surface that may be frequently touched by other people.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.

Disinfect High-Touch Surfaces

- Clean and disinfect areas as required in laboratories ([#10](#)) and in common/public spaces ([#11](#)).
- Clean high-touch surfaces daily in common areas (e.g., tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, phones, tablets, touch screens, remote controls, keyboards, handles, desks, sinks).
- Use disinfectants appropriate for COVID-19 ([EPA Disinfectant List](#)).
- See CDC recommendations for cleaning and disinfecting your work area ([CDC Recommendations](#)).

Yale Environmental Health & Safety

| | | Critical Research Only | Phase 1 Highly Restricted Access | Phase 2 Restricted Access | Phase 3 Less Restricted Operations |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| 1. | Laboratory Access | Only employees with approved exemptions for performing critical research tasks. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration for campus access when necessary for research purposes only. • PI safety plans for individual labs. • Chair/director safety plans for common spaces. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All on campus research possible. • Research activity must conform to physical distancing limits set by lab specific safety plans. | Some limited physical distancing or other requirements may still be in place. These will be communicated prior to Phase 3. |
| 2. | Approved Research Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only critical research allowed. • Registration for critical research and campus access granted by petition of the PI and vetted by the department chair, cognizant dean and the vice provost. • Travel for field work permitted for critical research only. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research that <i>requires</i> access to campus laboratory facilities is allowed. • Local travel for field work permitted with registration and when appropriate safety measures are employed. • In-person human subjects research not allowed, except in a clinical or hospital setting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All research is allowed on campus, with physical distancing limits defined by phase. • Travel for field work permissible with appropriate safety measures. | All research allowed with some limitations. |
| 3. | Remote Working Arrangements | If work can be done remotely, it <i>must</i> be done remotely. | If work can be done remotely, it <i>must</i> be done remotely. | Working from home is still encouraged, but previously required work from home can now be done on campus with physical distancing limits observed. | No requirement. |

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|----|--|---|---|--|--|
| 4. | In-Person Human Subjects Research | Not allowed, unless the research qualifies for the critical research exemption. | Not allowed, except in a clinical or hospital setting. | Allowed, with appropriate PPE, symptom screening and other safety measures typical of a clinical setting. | All research allowed, but some restrictions may still apply. |
| 5. | Physical Distancing Requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the density of trainees/staff/faculty to a minimum six-foot separation at all times. Work in shifts and limit concurrent use of research areas to minimize the time trainees/staff/faculty work in the same area. When practicable, one person per research bay. No group meetings. Occupancy of no more than 50% of capacity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the density of trainees/staff/faculty to a minimum six-foot separation at all times. Work in shifts and limit concurrent use of research areas to minimize the time trainees/staff/faculty work in the same area. When practicable, one person per research bay. No group meetings. Occupancy of no more than 50% of capacity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the density of trainees/staff/faculty to a minimum six-foot separation at all times. Work in shifts and limit concurrent use of research areas to minimize the time trainees/staff/faculty work in the same area. When practicable, one person per research bay. No group meetings of any significant size without the ability to maintain safe physical distancing. Occupancy of no more than 50% of capacity. | Limited social distancing measures in place. Large gatherings may be restricted. |
| 6. | Symptom Monitoring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-monitor daily for symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home if ill. If you are ill, follow Yale Health guidance and report to your direct supervisor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-monitor daily for symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home if ill. If you are ill, follow Yale Health guidance and report to your direct supervisor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-monitor daily for symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home if ill. If you are ill, follow Yale Health guidance and report to your direct supervisor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symptom monitoring encouraged, but not required. If you are ill, follow Yale Health guidance. |
| 7. | Virus and Antibody Testing | Conducted based upon public health guidance. | Conducted based upon public health guidance. | Conducted based upon public health guidance. | Conducted based upon public health guidance. |

Yale Environmental Health & Safety

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| 8. | PPE Requirements in Laboratories | PPE appropriate for critical research tasks. | Water-resistant face mask is required (provided via EHS). Specialized PPE may be required, as specified by EHS. | Water-resistant face mask is required (provided via EHS). Specialized PPE may be required, as specified by EHS. | Normal laboratory safety PPE requirements. |
| 9. | PPE Requirements in Common/Public Spaces | Face covering required. | Face covering required. | Face covering required. | Follow public health guidance. |
| 10. | Laboratory Cleaning | Lab staff responsible for disinfecting laboratory spaces. | Lab staff responsible for disinfecting laboratory spaces. | Lab staff responsible for disinfecting laboratory spaces. | Normal laboratory cleaning process/schedules resumed. |
| 11. | Common Space Cleaning | Heightened cleaning by custodial staff. | Heightened cleaning by custodial staff. | Cleaning by custodial staff follows posted guidance. | Follow public health guidance. |

Acknowledgements:

YALE NUS Social Distancing Best Practices

UC San Diego Campus Guidance

State of CT: Safe Workplace Rules for Essential Employers