



## Laboratory Animal Allergy (LAA)

Laboratory animal allergy (LAA) is an important occupational health issue among animal lab workers. Epidemiologic studies show that up to one third of workers exposed to laboratory animals develop symptoms of LAA, such as rhinitis; red, itchy, watery eyes; or contact rash or hives, and of those individuals at least one in ten will develop occupational asthma.<sup>1,3</sup>

### What is LAA?

Laboratory animal allergy (LAA) is an occupational allergy that develops when the body's immune system over-reacts to proteins made by animals (**animal allergens**).

Animal allergens can be found in **animal urine, dander, or saliva**. The most common way that allergens enter the body is through **inhalation**. You can also be exposed through *skin contact, eye contact, and ingestion*.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Symptoms of LAA

Common symptoms of LAA may include:<sup>3,4</sup>

- Red, itchy, watery eyes
- Stuffy nose or post-nasal drip
- Excessive sneezing
- Nose and throat irritation
- Coughing
- Rash, hives, or swelling

**Asthma symptoms** like coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, or shortness of breath can also arise. In rare cases, a severe allergic reaction (**anaphylaxis**) may occur.

If you experience symptoms of LAA, **notify your supervisor and contact EHS Occupational Health at 949-824-6200.**

### Reduce your exposure

- ✓ Follow safe work practices and good hygiene.
- ✓ Complete required training.
- ✓ Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- ✓ If required to wear a respirator, a respirator fit testing must be completed *annually*.

### Laboratory Animal Occupational Health Program (LAOHP)<sup>5</sup>

Complete the LAOHP questionnaire *at least annually* to help identify conditions that could place you at risk for LAA and, if appropriate, be referred to receive medical attention to properly manage it.



Scan to learn more about the LAOHP.

### References

1. Aoyama K, Ueda A, Manda F, Matsushita T, Ueda T, Yamauchi C. Allergy to laboratory animals—an epidemiologic study. *Br J Ind Med* 1992;49:41-7.
2. Harrison DJ. Controlling exposure to laboratory animal allergens. *ILAR J.* 2001;42(1):17-36. doi: 10.1093/ilar.42.1.17. PMID: 11123186.
3. Acton D, McCauley L. Laboratory Animal Allergy: An Occupational Hazard. *AAOHN Journal.* 2007;55(6):241-244. doi:10.1177/216507990705500604
4. Bush RK. Mechanism and epidemiology of laboratory animal allergy. *ILAR J.* 2001;42(1):4-11. doi: 10.1093/ilar.42.1.4. PMID: 11123184
5. <https://research.uci.edu/animal-care-and-use/training/laboratory-animal-occupational-health-program/>

