Physical Distancing Guidelines in Research Labs

Stay home if you get sick
Lab workers should remain home if they are sick.

Physical Distancing
Maintain a 6-foot physical separation between lab workers whenever possible, as referenced in OSU’s Policy 04-040, “Physical Distancing During COVID-19 Pandemic.” If you have questions or concerns, email ehs@oregonstate.edu.

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| Benchtop work in open lab areas | Assign staff only to alternating bench stations, have them work in different parts of the laboratory to maintain physical separation. Examples:  
- Remove chairs or label chairs to prevent use to provide separation between researchers when they are at the workbench.  
- If workers are working on back-to-back benches (backs facing each other), stagger workspaces in a zigzag pattern. |
| Work in small rooms (≥6 feet between workers impossible) | EH&S recommends restricting lab rooms where workers cannot consistently be ≥6 feet apart to only one person at a time. Creating a staggered work schedule for staff can assist with maintaining proper physical distancing. |
| Working in neighboring fume hoods and biosafety cabinets | Staff should avoid work in adjacent fume hoods or biosafety cabinets if physical distancing cannot be maintained. Staff should use alternate equipment if available or wait in turn for use. |
| Shared equipment | Place markers on the floor to identify 6 feet of separation when queuing up for the use of shared equipment. |

Many of your normal lab practices double as effective infection control measures:
- Consistent glove use provides a reminder to workers not to touch their face. Make sure that staff continue to wear the same PPE they use in normal circumstances.
- **Routine handwashing** — especially after removing gloves — prevents staff from spreading contamination from experiments onto clean surfaces. This also works well in limiting the spread of infectious agents.
- Disinfectants that are effective on other enveloped viruses will also inactivate SARS-CoV-2, providing the contact time is sufficient. The US Environmental Protections Agency maintains a website with up-to-date information on disinfectant products at [https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/selected-epa-registered-disinfectants](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/selected-epa-registered-disinfectants)
- Maintain customary [disinfection protocols](#) and consider increasing disinfecting more frequently touched surfaces in your lab that staff frequently contact.