Good Gloving Practice

1. Introduction

Gloves can help protect your skin from chemicals or other hazards you handle in your work. IN some instances they are also used to protect the work from contamination. Whatever the reason for wearing gloves, they need to be used correctly.

Remember: Gloves reduce the chance of skin contamination but **do not** provide absolute protection. Wearing gloves can also **increase** exposure risks from any chemicals or other contaminants already on the skin.

2. Selecting Gloves

Make sure you choose the right type of glove for the hazards involved and make sure they are the correct size.

2.1. Type

More detailed guidance is available in the Selection and Usage of Gloves for Protection against Hazardous Substances.

- For most chemical work, nitrile gloves will offer good protection, however some chemicals can quickly penetrate or damage a nitrile glove. So it very important to check the manufacturer's chemical resistance data charts.
- Vinyl (PVC) gloves are usually adequate to protect against grime, or where you are using gloves to protect the material you are handling e.g. clean room work or food handling.
- Because of the risks of allergy with latex gloves, their use must be avoided wherever possible. They should only be used where they provide a distinct advantage over alternative gloving material for the task and following risk assessment justifying their use. See the Policy on Use of Latex Gloves for more information
- **Disposable** gloves are intended for single use only to guard against splashes or incidental contact with chemicals. They must be changed after any splash or spill.
- **Re-useable** gloves are tougher and are a better choice if you need protection against abrasion or if the job requires direct contact with chemicals (e.g. immersion or handling cleaning rags) or if large volume splashes are likely.

2.2. Size

- The glove should give a comfortable, close fit against your fingers. A glove that is too tight can cause skin rashes and is liable to tear in use. A loose-fitting glove interferes with your grip.
- If you have to noticeably hold your fingers straight against the pull of the glove, then it is too small.
- A range of different glove sizes should be available for all users.

3. Before Use

- Always cover any broken skin, cuts or grazes with a waterproof plaster before putting on your gloves.
- If your hands are dirty, or you have been handling chemicals etc wash your hands before putting on gloves. Make sure you rinse and dry your hands well. Traces of soap held against the skin by a glove can cause irritant dermatitis.

4. During Use

- Remember to protect the skin **above** your glove. The sleeves of your laboratory coat should overlap the top of the glove during work. For greater security, tuck your sleeve into the cuff of the glove.
- Single use, disposable gloves should be changed immediately after **any** splash. Chemicals may quickly pass through or damage disposable gloves, particularly where the glove is of poor quality or incorrect material for the chemical.
- When working with hazardous substances it is important to change your gloves at the appropriate frequency determined by the breakthrough time.
- Even for low hazard operations or where the glove is being worn to protect the work, sweat and otherwise low hazard chemicals can build up inside the glove which can lead to dermatitis and other skin problems. Change gloves at least every half hour to avoid this.
- Rinse and dry your hands well between use.
- Avoid touching 'clean' surfaces such as telephones or door handles to minimise accidental contamination.
- Never wear gloves outside the laboratory. If hazardous materials have to be transported between labs use secondary containment.

5. After Use

- Take care when removing your gloves so you do not touch the outer surface. If double gloving, pull off the first glove so it turns inside out. Use this clean inner surface to hold the second glove while you pull it off.
- Always wash your hands and dry well after removing your gloves.
- Gloves worn in the lab should be considered hazardous waste and, depending on the nature of that hazard, should be put into the appropriate waste stream. On no account should gloves worn in laboratory or other areas where hazardous materials may be handled, be placed in none hazardous 'black bag' waste.

6. Hand Care

- Always rinse well to remove soap residues after washing your hands.
- Never use chemicals such as paraffin or acetone to clean your hands. They remove the natural oils from your skin and cause dermatitis.
- If you have to wash your hands often, then use a moisturising cream afterwards. These replace the natural protective oils which are removed through washing. Barrier creams may also be effective in preventing dermatitis.

- If you do develop a rash, or dermatitis— sore, cracked or inflamed skin immediately inform your supervisor and local Safety Officer and contact the Occupational Health Department for advice and to make an appointment.