

## Procedures for Rat Bites and Scratches

### Prevention

In the research laboratory or animal holding facility one of the most important things you can do to prevent bites and scratches is to learn the correct methods of handling the species that you intend to work with. Protective equipment, such as gloves and long-sleeved laboratory coats limit injury to the hands and arms. You can contact the staff in the Animal Care Facility for guidance.



### First Aid

1. As soon as possible wash the wound with plenty of soap (preferably antiseptic soap, such as Betadine®) and water for at least 15 minutes.
2. If wound is bleeding, cover with sterile gauze, non-sterile gauze or a paper towel. Sterile gauze is preferred.
3. Notify your supervisor.
4. Depending on the severity of the wound, seek medical treatment.
5. As soon as possible, complete an [Incident Report form](#).

### Zoonotic Agents

Modern laboratory mice are bred to exclude all zoonotic agents. Therefore, there is limited concern for disease from these research mice. There is, however, always concern about *secondary infections* that can occur with bites and scratches. Common skin, intestinal, and soil bacteria present on you or the animal can infect the scratch or bite wound and cause these secondary infections. Thus, handle all mice with care, always perform first aid, and seek medical consultation for severe wounds that appear to be infected.

Historically, rats have been known to carry a bacterium that causes Rat-Bite Fever. However, these bacteria have not been found in laboratory rats for decades due to the special efforts of commercial suppliers to eliminate the bacteria from breeding colonies.



**For Emergency Medical Assistance  
Call Campus Police at x 5555 or Health  
Services at x 2810**