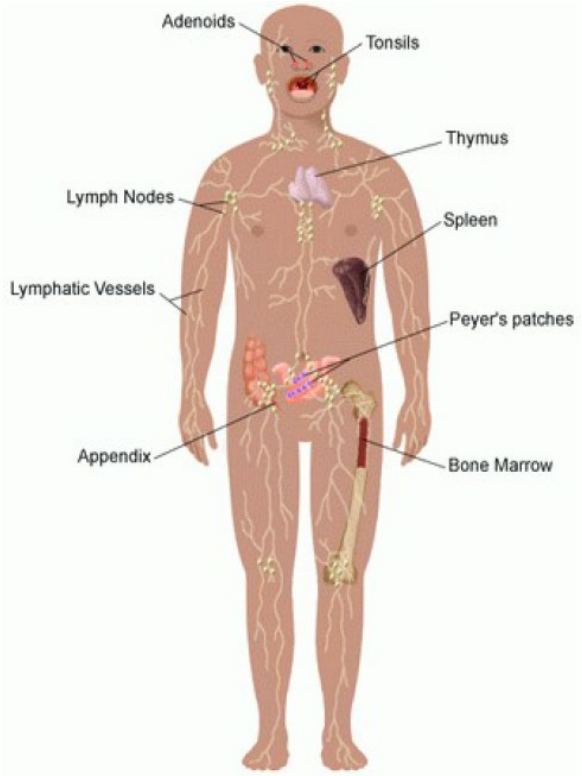
1.0 Introduction

Immune compromise, also referred to as immunocompromise or immunosuppression, is a condition in which the immune system does not work as well as it does in normal healthy workers. Immune compromised personnel are at higher risk of illness and/or more serious side effects of illness caused by an infectious disease.

Texas A&M University – San Antonio (A&M-SA) adheres to federal guidelines to minimize potential infection as a result of conditions that may compromise the immune system and predispose personnel to infection. To ensure compliance, this guideline mandates that all employees and students who work in research or teaching laboratories be provided with information on the potential risks of working with biological materials with a compromised immune system.

2.0 The Immune System

If you have certain types of medical conditions or are taking certain types of medications, you may be at an increased risk of becoming ill as a result of working with the materials in your laboratory. This increased risk is due to the fact that your body's natural defenses against illness may be compromised either by the disease itself or by the treatments you have been prescribed.



Immunocompromised patients are susceptible to bacterial, fungal and viral infections that healthy immune systems usually conquer. As a result, what may be safe to work with for healthy adults, may not be safe for people with an impaired immune system and special precautions may be necessary. Some examples of these conditions or medications include:

• HIV infection • Leukemia • Certain types of cancers • Diabetes • Spleen removal surgery • Monoclonal antibody therapy • Monoclonal antibody therapy	• White blood cell deficiencies or diseases • Prolonged corticosteroid therapy • Chemotherapy to prevent transplant rejection • Anti-neoplastic drugs • Pregnancy

If you have any of these conditions, are taking any of these medications, or are if your immune system is impaired in any way you may want to consult with your physician and inform him/her of the materials you are working with. Also, you should become familiar with the types of materials that you are working with to see if you are at increased risk of becoming ill as result of working with them.

3.0 If I am immune compromised, what can I do to reduce my risk of infection?

It is important to ask for help in evaluating your risks. The following resources are available:

- **Know your workplace:** A&M-SA RAEHS and the A&M-SA Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) conduct risk assessments of research projects and procedures to identify and minimize the potential risk of exposure to research-

related hazards for all employees. In addition to identifying possible hazards in the workplace, RAEHS personnel can help evaluate engineering controls and safety practices to minimize your risk of exposure. In general, safety practices in the research setting are designed to minimize all personnel exposure to hazards. For specific information about animal research settings, contact RAEHS.

- **Talk to your provider:** A primary care physician/provider who is aware of your medical condition and has a list of infectious agents present at your workplace can help you make important decisions regarding whether you should ask for workplace accommodation. In addition to discussing the infectious agents present in your workplace, discuss with the doctor your work activity, frequency and duration of contact with infectious agents, and the normal safety practices and equipment present in your workplace.
- **Consult with the Occupational Health Provider:** After talking to your physician to discuss infectious agents present in your workplace and your health condition, if medical recommendations or restrictions are necessary to minimize exposure, RAEHS and the Occupational Health Provider can assist in documenting medical recommendations.

4.0 What else can I do to reduce my risk?

- Always use the recommended engineering controls (such as biosafety cabinets).
- Always wear the recommended personal protective equipment.
- Always wash your hands after contact with potential hazards, and after taking off gloves.
- Ask for help in requesting accommodations in the workplace to avoid possible exposures.

5.0 References

A&M-SA RAEHS wishes to acknowledge the following institutions whose websites provided information and resources that were referenced creating this plan:

1. UC San Diego Information for Immune Compromised researchers
   https://blink.ucsd.edu/safety/research-lab/occ-health/immune-compromise.html#If-I-am-immune-compromised,-wha

2. UC Irvine - Information for Immune Compromised Researchers
   https://ehs.uci.edu/research-safety/occupational-health/_pdf/immune-compromised-researchers.pdf

For more information, contact RAEHS at vpantusa@tamusa.edu or 210-784-2822.