

Eating or drinking is prohibited in the lab because it potentially exposes researchers to unnecessary health risks. Researchers who eat/drink in the lab may ingest hazardous chemicals (e.g., toxicants, corrosives), biohazardous materials (e.g., toxins, viruses) or radioisotopes that may have come in contact with food and beverages.

The following activities are prohibited in the laboratory per state regulations (i.e., Cal-OSHA [§3368](#), [§5193](#), and [§5191](#) - best practice) and federal regulations and standards (i.e., NRC 10CFR [§ 33.17](#); CDC - see citations in **References**).

- **DO NOT** eat, drink, smoke, chew gum, or apply cosmetics in laboratories where chemical, biological, or radioactive materials are present.
- **DO NOT** eat, drink, smoke, chew gum or apply cosmetics after leaving a laboratory, without first washing hands.
- **DO NOT** store, handle, or consume food or beverages in storage areas, refrigerators, glassware or utilize utensils which are also used for laboratory operations.
- **DO NOT** allow food waste, wrappers, containers, etc. to be placed in laboratory trash cans as this may be considered evidence of food or beverage consumption within the laboratory.



These prohibitions apply to an entire laboratory, not just the areas within the laboratory where hazardous materials are used. This includes study carrels and desks that are not physically separated from the work area by floor-to-ceiling walls with doors that close.

Food or drink may be moved through a laboratory to a non-laboratory only if the food or beverage is wrapped or in a covered container; a container within a secondary container is recommended.



What I need to know...

- Eating or drinking in the laboratory is prohibited.
- Do not store food or drink in the laboratory.
- Wash hands after removing gloves regardless of whether hazardous agents were handled.
- Wash hands after leaving the laboratory.

The following actions are ways to help with compliance and prevent accidental ingestion of hazardous materials:



- Print and post clear warning signs that say, “**NO FOOD OR DRINK**” on lab refrigerators/freezers and lab microwaves to warn lab personnel not to store or cook food in the laboratory.
- Assign a responsible person to make sure there is no food stored in these areas and check periodically.
- Never use lab glassware to prepare or consume food or beverages.
- Never use food containers to store chemicals or chemical waste.
- Remove gloves and wash your hands after working with hazardous materials. Accidental ingestion of hazardous materials may lead to serious illness or injury, possibly death.

References

[OSHA Chemical Hygiene Plan](#)

[OSHA Laboratory Safety Guidance](#)

[National Research Council Prudent Practices in the Laboratory](#)

[CDC/NIH Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories](#)

CDC MMWR [Guidelines for Safe Work Practices in Human and Animal Medical Diagnostic Laboratories](#)

