

Investigator Responsibilities



under the
***NIH Guidelines
for Research Involving
Recombinant DNA
Molecules***

NIH Office of Biotechnology Activities

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What are the *NIH Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules*?

The *NIH Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules (NIH Guidelines)* detail procedures and practices for the containment and safe conduct of various forms of recombinant DNA research, including research involving genetically modified plants and animals, and human gene transfer.

Who must comply with the *NIH Guidelines*?

All institutions that receive NIH funding for recombinant DNA research must comply with the *NIH Guidelines*. Researchers at institutions that are subject to the *NIH Guidelines* must comply with the requirements even if their individual projects are not funded by NIH.

What is an Institutional Biosafety Committee?

Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBCs) provide local review and oversight of nearly all forms of research utilizing recombinant DNA. They ensure that recombinant DNA research conducted at or sponsored by the institution is in compliance with the *NIH Guidelines*. A requirement of the *NIH Guidelines* is that an IBC must review and approve all research subject to the *NIH Guidelines*.

What is the NIH Office of Biotechnology Activities?

The NIH Office of Biotechnology Activities (OBA) promotes science, safety, and ethics in biotechnology through the advancement of knowledge, enhancement of public understanding, and development of sound public policies. A core responsibility of OBA is to foster awareness of, and adherence to, the standards and practices set forth in the *NIH Guidelines*.

***Safety and science
go hand in hand***

Principal Investigator Responsibilities

Principal Investigators (PIs) are responsible for full compliance with the *NIH Guidelines* during the conduct of recombinant DNA research. As part of this general responsibility, the PI should:

- ◆ Be adequately trained in good microbiological techniques.
- ◆ Provide laboratory research staff with protocols describing potential biohazards and necessary precautions.
- ◆ Instruct and train laboratory staff in: (i) the practices and techniques required to ensure safety, and (ii) the procedures for dealing with accidents.
- ◆ Inform the laboratory staff of the reasons and provisions for any precautionary medical practices advised or requested (e.g., vaccinations or serum collection).
- ◆ Supervise laboratory staff to ensure that the required safety practices and techniques are employed.
- ◆ Correct work errors and conditions that may result in the release of recombinant DNA materials.
- ◆ Ensure the integrity of physical containment (e.g., biological safety cabinets) and biological containment (e.g., purity and genotypic and phenotypic characteristics).
- ◆ Comply with permit and shipping requirements for recombinant DNA molecules.
- ◆ Adhere to IBC-approved emergency plans for handling accidental spills and personnel contamination.

Before initiating research subject to the *NIH Guidelines*, the PI must:

- ◆ Determine whether the research is subject to Section III-A, III-B, III-C, III-D, or III-E of the *NIH Guidelines*.
- ◆ Propose physical and biological containment levels in accordance with the *NIH Guidelines* when registering research with the IBC.

- ◆ Propose appropriate microbiological practices and laboratory techniques to be used for the research.
- ◆ Submit a research protocol to the IBC for review and approval.
- ◆ Seek OBA's determination of containment for experiments that require case-by-case review.
- ◆ Petition OBA, with notice to the IBC, for proposed exemptions from the *NIH Guidelines*.
- ◆ Obtain IBC approval before initiating research subject to the *NIH Guidelines*.
- ◆ Seek NIH approval, in addition to IBC approval, to conduct experiments specified in Sections III-A and III-B of the *NIH Guidelines*.

While conducting research subject to the *NIH Guidelines*, the PI must:

- ◆ Determine the need for IBC review before modifying recombinant DNA research already approved by the IBC.
- ◆ Submit any subsequent changes (e.g., changes in the source of DNA or host-vector system) to the IBC for review and approval or disapproval.
- ◆ Remain in communication with the IBC throughout the duration of the project.
- ◆ Report any significant problems pertaining to the operation and implementation of containment practices and procedures, violations of the *NIH Guidelines*, or any significant research-related accidents and illnesses to the IBC, OBA, and, as applicable, the Biological Safety Officer, Greenhouse or Animal Facility Director, and other appropriate authorities.