Laboratory Guidelines for Human Body Dissection

Suggested by the American Association of Anatomists

Due to the particular nature of dissecting the human body, you need to be aware of certain guidelines and procedures.

Health Considerations and Safety Procedures – While in the laboratory, most programs require participants to follow universal precautions.

Eye Protection / Contact Lenses – You are required to wear eye protection in the laboratory (regular glasses or safety glasses). Contact lenses are not allowed (they increase your eye exposure to chemicals, and formaldehyde may damage your lenses). You must wear safety glasses when using tools in the lab (e.g., saws, hammers, chisels).

Proper Attire – Everyone is expected to dress and act appropriately in the laboratory. You are required to wear long pants, protective aprons or lab coats, and gloves in the laboratory. Open-toed shoes, sandals, shorts, or skirts are not permitted. Shoes should have a non-slip sole.

Pregnancy – Formaldehyde has been shown to be teratogenic in laboratory animals (1), however studies involving humans are ambiguous and somewhat inconclusive. If you are pregnant or become pregnant during the course, you should consult with your physician for their recommendation regarding participation.


Care of the Donated Body

The donated bodies used in this program are the remains of generous people who have willed their bodies for the purpose of education and research. As a participant in this course, you are privileged to have the opportunity to use this material. The donated bodies are to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. For this reason, the following regulations will be observed while in our laboratory:

1. Human tissue and other materials obtained during dissection of the donated body (this includes prostheses such as artificial joints, pacemakers, heart valves, etc.) may not be removed from the laboratory under any circumstance. Anatomical models should not be removed from the laboratory.
2. The donor entrusted you to care for and respect her or his body. It is essential to wrap the donated body with wet cloths, using a special wetting solution, after each dissection (or follow specific instructions from your laboratory director) to prevent drying of the tissue. Make sure you close the table or cover the donated body according to instructions from your laboratory director after each dissection.

3. Do not remove the ID tag from the table for any reason. Do not transfer body parts from your dissection table to another table.

4. The laboratory is to be kept neat at all times, and you are expected to clean your area after each day’s dissection. This includes wiping up soiled areas on your dissection table and the floor around your table. Note that proper trash disposal is as follows:

   - Body (tissue) waste – special marked containers
   - Gloves, paper towels, scalpel blade wrappers – designated trash containers
   - Blades – red sharps disposal boxes

5. Absolutely no food or drink is allowed in the lab. Pets, music, or similar distractions are similarly not allowed in the laboratory. Smoking is prohibited. The use of photographic or video equipment is not permitted unless approved by a faculty member for an educational project.

**Policy on Conduct**

All of the bodies that are provided for your education are made available by generous donations. It is obvious that these gifts must be respected. To that end, a policy on standards of conduct for students and visitors in matters relating to anatomic study is specified. In summarizing this policy, we cannot overemphasize the need for genuine respect for the dignity of the body, which has been given to you, and your obligation to treat it in a responsible and professional manner. Inappropriate or improper comments and conversational improprieties both within and outside the laboratory -- among professionals or non-professionals -- will not be tolerated.

Teaching laboratories are designated as Restricted Areas. Only authorized persons or individuals who have been granted specific permission are allowed admission. Entrance into these areas, including the Gross Anatomy Laboratory, is a privilege, and all persons granted admission are required to uphold and respect the highest standards of conduct and professional ethics.

The use of photographic equipment is not permitted in any teaching laboratory without specific approval from the course director. The laboratory is a teaching facility, and decorum in the laboratory is to be maintained as in any classroom.