Working with Fish (Saltwater, Freshwater)
Adapted from Oregon State University, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Animal Use Medical Screening (AUMS):
All personnel working with animals, their tissues, or working in areas where animals are housed must complete an Animal Use Medical Screening (AUMS) to screen for exposure to possible health hazards in the work environment. Complete the form online at: https://www.ehs.washington.edu/research-lab/animal-use-medical-screening-aums.

There are a number of infectious agents that are found in fish and in fresh/salt water that have the potential to be transmitted to humans (see Potential zoonotic disease from fish, first bullet below). However, besides food poisoning, the overall incidence of transmission of disease from fish to humans is low. In general, people contract fish-borne disease through ingestion of infected fish tissues or water, or by contamination of lacerated or abraded skin.

An important feature of many bacterial and protozoal organisms is their opportunistic nature. Disease in humans often requires a preexisting state that compromises the immune system. If you have an immune-compromising medical condition or you are taking medications that impair your immune system (steroids, immunosuppressive drugs, or chemotherapy) you are at-risk for contracting a fish-borne disease and should consult your healthcare provider.

Potential zoonotic disease from fish:
Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for information on zoonotic disease and prevention and much more: https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/fish.html.

Preventative measures:
- Tetanus booster should be obtained every 10 years.
- Wear protective gloves, i.e. latex, nitrile, while handling fish. Latex dishwashing gloves may afford greater protection depending upon activities. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water upon glove removal. Use antiseptic hand sanitizer (e.g., Purcel) between glove use, if needed, until you can get to handwashing facilities.

Injuries:
- See the EHS Exposure Response Poster
- Immediately wash area thoroughly with soap and water for at least 15 minutes.
- Control any bleeding and cover with protective dressing (bandage, etc.).
- For any injuries, needlestick/sharps injury or for signs/symptoms of wound infection such as redness, swelling, or pain contact the Employee Health Center at Hall Health at 206-685-1026. After hours or if the clinic is unavailable, go to UWMC ER.
Working with Fish (Saltwater, Freshwater)

**Illness:**
If you develop signs or symptoms that you think may be related to your work with fish and/or research work, contact the Employee Health Center, 206-685-1026. If you see your own provider, inform him/her that you work with fish and any other pertinent information regarding your research work. Inform Employee Health after seeing your healthcare provider.

**Report work-related illness or injuries on the UW Online Accident Reporting System (OARS) accessed from our website:** [http://www.ehs.washington.edu/ohsoars/index.shtm](http://www.ehs.washington.edu/ohsoars/index.shtm)
For questions about OARS reporting, contact EH&S at 206-543-7388.

**Allergies:**
People who are not able to eat fish because of an allergy may be more susceptible to an allergic reaction from touching fish, although this is uncommon. If you are experiencing allergy symptoms such as runny nose and sneezing (allergic rhinitis), irritation and tearing of eyes (allergic conjunctivitis), or skin rash (atopic dermatitis), contact your healthcare provider, or the Employee Health Center at Hall Health, 206-685-1026.