

Basic Biosafety in Everyday Life in the Lab

Lab safety is not about avoiding major accidents; it is also about noticing the small risks that become invisible through routine. Sometimes the most important safety step is simply slowing down long enough to notice what we have stopped seeing. I learned that lesson firsthand during an everyday task.

I like to think I'm careful in the lab. I wear my PPE, keep my bench clean, and follow protocols. But sometimes, it's not the big, dramatic mistakes that get us; it's the little things we stop noticing. A few weeks ago, I autoclaved a few large glass bottles of culture media, as I frequently do. When the cycle finished, I was in a hurry because I was running three experiments. As I carried it to the autoclave cart, I realized the bottle was heavier than I expected. Before I could react, I dropped it. The bottle hit my foot even though I was wearing socks and closed-toe shoes; the burn was still bad enough that it took a full week to heal. That experience reminded me how much worse it could have been if I had been wearing open shoes. The simple protection that day prevented a serious injury, and it reminded me that PPE isn't optional just because we're not working in a BSL-2 or high-risk area. Routine can make small hazards easy to miss. We stop noticing whether our shoes are fully covered, whether the path is clear, whether the bottle is too hot to hold comfortably, or whether we are rushing because we feel pressured to keep up with everything at once. These small details matter because they are easy to overlook when work becomes routine. That is why lab safety depends not only on training, but also on attention to the everyday habits we take for granted. We stop reading warning signs because we "already know" what they say. We lift too much, rush through tasks, or bypass small safety steps because everything feels familiar. Familiarity doesn't make it safe; it just makes danger harder to see.

Mental calmness matters too. When we are stressed or overloaded, especially while juggling multiple experiments, we are more likely to skip a deep breath and overlook basic safety steps. Taking a moment to pause, breathe, and reset can help us notice the small things before they become serious problems. Safety is not just about training or rules. It is about staying present, paying attention, and respecting the everyday habits that protect us all.

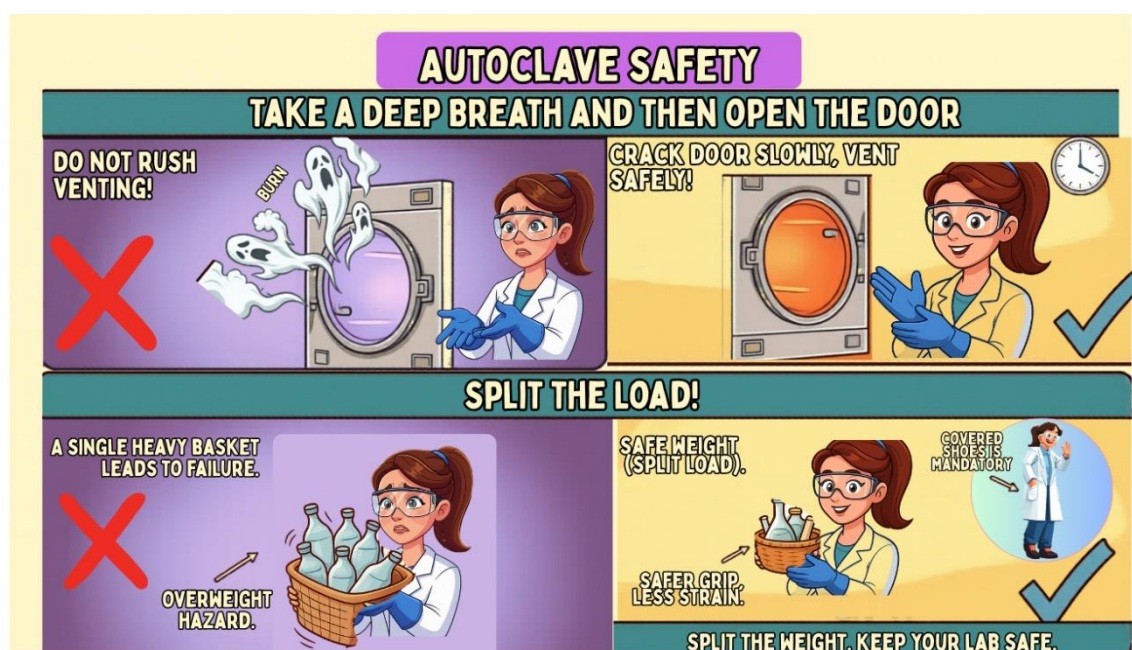


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