



Safety concerns to workers

- Workers who interact with hazardous/cytotoxic medications, such as preparation or administration, as well as workers who cleaning equipment, linens, or facilities, have tested positive as having the medication in their system.
- Acute health concerns include skin, eye and mucous membrane irritation, allergic-type reactions, and hair loss.
- Chronic health concerns include damage to liver, kidney, lungs and heart. Hazardous/Cytotoxic medications have also been linked to pregnancy-related health concerns such as spontaneous abortions, malformed fetuses, and instances of infertility.
- Hazardous/Cytotoxic medications can enter the body through inhalation, skin absorption, ingestion, and through handling of contaminated body waste.

How to protect yourself from hazardous/cytotoxic medications

- Ask your employer for a copy of their policies and procedures when dealing with hazardous medications. Also ask to review a copy of your hazard assessment, and review how your employer eliminates or controls the hazard.
- When handling hazardous medications, wear powder-free chemotherapy rated protective gloves. Depending on the situation, you may need to wear 2 pairs of gloves, as well as a long sleeved non-permeable gown, shoe covers, approved eye protection such as goggles and if a risk of splashing exists, wear a full-faced shield.
- If the medication can become airborne, the use of a properly fit-tested respirator, such as a N95 or N100, is strongly recommended. In specific occasions, you may be required to wear a cartridge respirator for added protection.
- If you are required to handle biological fluids, excretions, contaminated bedding/clothing, or soiled equipment of patients who have received hazardous medications, it is strongly recommended you wear two pairs of gloves, a non-permeable protective gown, shoe covers, a properly fit-tested respirator or a face shield where a risk of splashing is possible.
- Hazardous waste materials should be handled differently than regular waste materials. It is recommended that all hazardous and cytotoxic waste materials be placed in a properly labelled container, so that other workers are aware of the hazard.

AUPE strongly encourages all workers who have dealt with hazardous/cytotoxic medications either directly or indirectly and without any proper personal protective equipment to file a workers report with the Workers' Compensation Board, as a report-only claim.

HAZARDOUS/CYTOTOXIC MEDICATIONS

KNOW THE RISKS

What is a hazardous/cytotoxic medication?

Hazardous medications are those medications that can pose a health risk from exposure in the workplace due to the medication's inherent toxicity.

Cytotoxic medications, also known as antineoplastic agents, are primarily used to treat cancer, most often as part of a chemotherapy treatment.

The use of cytotoxic medications is growing, and is now being used to treat conditions such as rheumatoid, juvenile arthritis, and multiple sclerosis.

Cytotoxic medications inhibit cell growth, which means that both cancerous cells and non-cancerous cells are affected and damaged.