

Safety for Pregnant Staff

We have a pharmacy staff member who is planning to get pregnant and has requested to be removed from activities involving the preparation or checking of chemotherapy. Does BC Cancer have any policies which apply to this situation?

The governing regulation regarding this situation is actually from Work Safe BC.

The [Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) Regulation 6.49](#) relating to Reproductive Toxins states the following:

1. At any worksite where a worker is occupationally exposed to a cytotoxic drug that is a reproductive toxin, the employer must develop policy and procedures appropriate to the risk, which may include protective reassignment
2. The policy and procedures must inform workers about the reproductive toxin and identify ways to minimize exposure to the reproductive toxin for a worker who has advised the employer of pregnancy or intent to conceive a child

There are two BC Cancer Systemic Therapy policies [Systemic Therapy - [Policies & Procedures](#)] that address this situation:

1. **Policy V-10 – Hazardous Drug Safe Handling Standards** states that: It is the responsibility of Directors/ Managers and Supervisory Staff to make every effort to accommodate requests to change work assignments from staff who are pregnant, breastfeeding or attempting to reproduce.
2. **Policy V-20 – Employee Health: Management of Risks Related to Hazardous Drugs** regarding pregnancy states that:
 - o Employees must be fully informed of the potential reproductive hazard(s)

- It is the responsibility of the employee handling cytotoxic agents to discuss with their immediate supervisor any desired change in work assignment as a result of their pregnancy, breast-feeding or attempt to reproduce

Organizations are required to have policies and procedures in place to minimize exposure to chemotherapy and hazardous drugs for all employees at all times. Protective reassignment may not always be feasible due to staffing or other constraints. However, whenever possible, anyone who is pregnant, breastfeeding or actively trying to conceive should not handle chemotherapy or hazardous drugs. Individual employers or health authorities should be contacted for guidelines relating to the duration of time allowed for the protective reassignment of duties for someone who is attempting to conceive or is breastfeeding.

BC Cancer considers each employee request for protective reassignment on an individual basis, since the circumstances of each situation can be quite varied.

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