
COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT FOR SAFE HANDLING OF HAZARDOUS DRUGS

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. Review of guidelines for the safe handling of hazardous drugs.
- B. Recommendations from Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
- C. Safety procedures for personnel, based on their specific roles related to hazardous drug handling.

2. REVIEW OF RISKS OF OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE

- A. The greatest risk of occupational exposure to hazardous drugs occurs during the manufacturing and preparation processes.
- B. A lower risk of occupational exposure occurs when handling patient excreta, where drugs or their metabolites are present in lower concentration.
 - 1) Chronic low-level exposure to hazardous drugs can lead to absorption.
 - 2) Acute exposure to hazardous drugs may lead to acute symptoms.
 - 3) The use of PPE reduces the absorption of hazardous drugs and the incidence of adverse health effects.
- C. Review of potential points of exposure including absorption of drugs through contact with the skin, mucous membranes, or eyes and through drug ingestion as a result of contact with food, beverages, chewing gum, food containers and utensils, or tobacco products.
- D. Examples of areas at risk for **touch** contamination.
 - 1) On the outside of a receptacle or puncture-proof container where cytotoxic waste is store.
 - 2) On the outside of a urinary catheter drainage bag of a patient receiving chemotherapy therapy.
 - 3) On a cart used to transport hazardous drugs from the pharmacy preparation area to the place of administration.
 - 4) On the over bed or chair side table where chemotherapy is placed during administration.

3. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

A. Gloves

- 1) Good quality gloves made of nitrile, polyurethane, neoprene, or other materials that have been tested with hazardous drugs
- 2) Select powder-free/latex-free gloves
- 3) Inspect gloves for visible defects
- 4) Change gloves if damaged or contaminated

B. Gowns

- 1) Disposable
- 2) Lint-free, low/non permeable fabric
- 3) Closed front (back closure), long sleeves, and elastic or knit closed cuffs

C. Eye and Face Protection

- 1) Whenever splashes, sprays, or aerosols of hazardous drugs may be generated and potentially result in eye, nose, or mouth contamination, chemical-barrier face and eye protection must be provided and used in accordance with OSHA standards.
- 2) Eyeglasses with side shields are inadequate protection.

4. PROPER DISPOSAL OF HAZARDOUS DRUGS -POST ADMINISTRATION

- A. Implement safe handling precautions during chemo administration and for 48 hours after completion of therapy when handling body fluids or linens.
- B. Wear a face shield whenever splashing is possible, for example when flushing a toilet without a lid.
- C. Healthcare workers handling laundry items contaminated with urine, stool, and other excreta should wear disposable gowns and gloves (Nitrile gloves and Fluid Impermeable gowns)
- D. Discard gowns if **not** soiled in biohazardous waste (red-bag) container provided by Environmental Services.
- E. Discard of all IV tubing, bags, bottles, soiled gowns and gloves in the Hazardous Waste Barrel provided by the Safety Department.
- F. IV syringes that are considered "empty"... or residually contaminated" with Cytotoxic drugs can be placed in a regular sharps container. The sharps container must be placed in the Yellow-BioHazardous Waste Box (provided by Environmental Services) for incineration for all units/areas that handle Cytotoxic drugs. (This will allow Standards to be met under the EPA/ or State law for Hazardous Waste Management Guidelines.

5. PROCEDURE FOR CLEAN UP OF HAZARDOUS DRUGS

- A. Assess for and isolate any individual involved in the spill of a hazardous drug.
- B. If the individual's clothing or skin has made contact with the hazardous agent:
Immediately wash the area with soap and water. Use Eye System wash if needed.
- C. Get **HELP!** Know where the **spill kits are located on the unit.**
- D. **Place all items used in the spill kit in the Yellow Bio-Hazardous Box.**
- F. Call the **SAFETY OFFICE** to replace the used spill kit.

Reference

OSHA's Standards 1910. 1030; 1910. 1200, 1968.

EPA Laws and Regulations, 2005.www.epa.gov

Oncology Nursing Society, Safe Handling of Hazardous Drugs, 2003

LSUHSC- Safety Department, 2007