

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 hazardous drugs. Does BC Cancer have any policies which apply to this situation?

The governing regulation regarding this situation is actually from Work Safe BC, [Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) Regulation 6.47](#) relating to **Reproductive toxins**. It states the following:

“If a worker is or may be exposed to a hazardous drug that is a reproductive toxin, an employer must develop

(a) a written policy about the availability of protective reassignment, and

(b) a procedure for determining if protective reassignment is appropriate for workers who advise the employer of a pregnancy or an intent to conceive a child.”

The corresponding BC Cancer policy is [Policy V-20 – Employee Health: Management of Risks Related to Hazardous Drugs](#). It states the following regarding **Pregnancy**:

- *“Employees must be fully informed of any potential reproductive hazard.*
- *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 hazardous drugs (e.g., chemotherapy) 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 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.