



NATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY FUNCTION – NHSF

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

# HSE GUIDELINE ON THE SAFE USE AND HANDLING OF CYTOTOXIC DRUGS 2016

FAST FACT, REF FF:007:00, AUGUST 2016

This FAST FACT provides a brief overview of the *HSE Guideline on the Safe Handling and Use of Cytotoxic Drugs 2016*. The guideline can be downloaded [here](#).

**DID YOU KNOW** that cytotoxic drugs are therapeutic agents, intended for but not limited to the treatment of cancer, and are used in a variety of healthcare settings e.g. Oncology units, Laboratories



## POLICY STATEMENT

It is the Policy of the HSE to ensure protection of employees from the risks related to the exposure to cytotoxic drugs.

## PURPOSE

This Guideline is intended to raise awareness among Managers and employees of the hazards associated with cytotoxic drugs and will assist in the development of the necessary risk assessments, policies and procedures to ensure the safety, health and welfare of employees and others who may be exposed. It also provides information about legislative requirements.

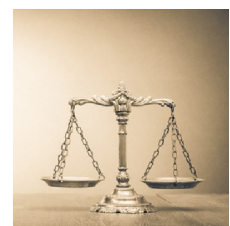
## SCOPE

The Guideline applies to *all employees working in hospital departments* where work activities may involve the risk of exposure of any employee to a cytotoxic drug.

*The Guideline does not deal with patient care, except in the context of workplace health and safety, and hence does not provide information on the clinical/patient treatment aspects of prescribing, preparing, and administering of cytotoxic drugs.*

## HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 and other associated Regulations.
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Chemical Agents) Regulations, 2001
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Carcinogens) Regulations, 2001



Health Services **People Strategy 2015-2018** *Leaders in People Services*

**MANAGERS KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Managers must:

- Assess any risk to any employee's health or safety resulting from any activity likely to involve a risk of exposure to a cytotoxic drug, and for that purpose to determine the nature, degree, routes of exposure and duration of any employee's exposure. Implement control measures identified through the risk assessment process.
- Reduce the use of cytotoxic drugs (in so far as is technically possible) by replacing them with substances, preparations or processes which eliminate or reduce the risk to an employee's health or safety.

**EMPLOYEES KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Employees must:

- Adhere to this Guideline
- Attend training
- Comply with any agreed cytotoxic drug policies, procedures and safe work practices

Detailed Roles & Responsibilities are outlined in the *HSE Guideline on the Safe Use and Handling of Cytotoxic*

**RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

Cytotoxic Drug Risk Assessment Form – Part 3 of 3					
HAZARD & RISK DESCRIPTION	IMPACTS/VULNERABILITIES	EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES	ADDITIONAL CONTROLS REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR ACTION	DUO DATE
Describe the risk associated with the activity being undertaken.  For example - risk of ill health due to potential exposure to cytotoxic drugs of cancer to members of staff, the control of exposure, e.g. skin contact with cytotoxic waste should be identified to identify the presence - e.g. daily tests.	Refer to Annex 1 to the HSE Risk Assessment. This includes the impact & vulnerabilities that may be to employees, service users and the Organisation.	Detail the control measures in place to reduce the risk - include all measures to eliminate or reduce the risk - For further guidance refer to Appendix 2.	Detail the measures necessary to eliminate or further reduce the level of risk.  Consider the hierarchy of controls: Elimination/ substitution/ engineering/administrative/PPE.  Consider the interim and long term measures.	From the name of the responsible person - the implementation of additional controls to be implemented on site.	From the date when implementation of additional controls is required on site.

Central to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Carcinogens) Regulations, 2001 is a requirement to identify the hazards and conduct a written assessment of the risks arising from the work activities. This Risk Assessment will establish the cytotoxic drug in use, who is at risk, the route of exposure, the specific activities where there is a risk of exposure and the control measures required.

INITIAL RISK		RESIDUAL RISK		STATUS
Likelihood	Impact	Likelihood	Impact	Open, Closed or Monitored
Lowest score (1-5)	Lowest score (1-5)	Lowest score (1-5)	Lowest score (1-5)	

The risk assessment process for a given task comprises of the following **FOUR STEPS** which are detailed in Appendix III of the *HSE Guideline on the Safe Handling and Use of Cytotoxic Drugs 2016*

1. Identify the hazards
2. Identify the risks
3. Rate the risks
4. Identify additional control measures required

To assist you in completing your Risk Assessment a Sample Risk Assessment is attached to the Policy

If requested, the employer is also required to provide the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) with the findings of any assessment where the risk assessment identifies a risk to any employee's health or safety, AND have arrangements in place to deal with accidents / incidents and emergencies



These requirements are detailed in Section 7.0 of the *Guideline on the Safe Handling and Use of Cytotoxic Drugs 2016*

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

- HSE Guideline on the Safe Handling and Use of Cytotoxic Drugs 2016
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Chemical Agents) Regulations, 2001
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Carcinogens) Regulations, 2001

