
Attachment #2: Hazardous Drugs and High Alert Medication Classifications

Hazardous Drugs

The goal of identifying hazardous drugs is to utilize a standard precautions approach to handling these drugs in the workplace. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has identified drugs considered hazardous so as to improve health care worker awareness and safety.

Hazardous drugs include those used for cancer chemotherapy, antiviral drugs, hormones, some bioengineered drugs, and other miscellaneous drugs.

NIOSH Definition of Hazardous Drugs

Drugs considered hazardous include those that exhibit one or more of the following characteristics in humans or animals:

1. Carcinogenicity
2. Teratogenicity or other developmental toxicity
3. Reproductive toxicity
4. Organ toxicity at low doses
5. Genotoxicity
6. Structure and toxicity profiles of new drugs that mimic existing drugs determined hazardous by the above criteria

Some drugs defined as hazardous may not pose a significant risk of direct occupational exposure because of their dosage formulation (for example, coated tablets or capsules- solid, intact medications that are administered to patients without modifying the formulation). However, they may pose a risk if solid drug formulations are altered, such as crushing tablets or making solutions from them outside a ventilated cabinet.

Handling Hazardous Drugs

Information regarding proper handling of hazardous drugs may be obtained from the following sources:

1. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)
2. Product Labeling and Product Inserts
3. Infusion Company/Vendor Information
4. IV Resource Nurse

List of Organization Specific Drugs that should be Handled as Hazardous

Home Health VNA has identified the following drugs that should be handled as hazardous. This list will be reviewed no less than annually and updated on an ongoing basis as needed.

<i>DRUG</i>	<i>CLASSIFICATION</i>
Cytarabine	Antineoplastic agent
Cyclosporin	Immunosuppressive
Fluorouracil	Antineoplastic agent
Ganciclovir	Antiviral
Irinotecan	Antineoplastic agent
Methotrexate	Antineoplastic agent
Paclitaxel	Antineoplastic agent
Pentamidine isethionate	Miscellaneous anti-infective
Tamoxifen	Antineoplastic agent

High Alert Medication Classifications

High-alert medications are drugs that bear a heightened risk of causing significant patient harm when they are used in error. Although mistakes may or may not be more common with these drugs, the consequences of an error are clearly more devastating to patients. Home Health VNA has identified the following classifications of medications commonly used in home care to be inherently high risk and has developed patient education materials with which to assist patients to learn about the risks associated with these medications so that they can be properly informed about medication management and monitoring for possible adverse effects of these medications.

<i>CLASSIFICATION</i>	<i>MEDICATION EXAMPLES (not limited to)</i>
Antithrombotic Agents	Warfarin, Heparin
Hypoglycemic Agents	Insulin, Metformin, Glyburide
Narcotic Analgesics	Morphine, Hydrocodone, Percocet