

Medications with handling precautions: Keeping you and your residents safe

High Risk vs Hazardous – What's the difference?

High-risk medications have a high potential to cause significant harm to patients if misused or used in error, while hazardous medications pose a risk to healthcare workers (and potentially patients) due to their toxic properties during handling and preparation.

High-risk medications focus on patient safety during administration, while hazardous medications focus on the safety of workers during handling and preparation.

High-risk medications are those medicines that have a high risk of causing significant patient harm or death when used in error. Although errors may or may not be more common than with other medicines, the consequences of errors with these medicines can be more devastating.

High Risk medications include:

- Hazardous medications e.g. cytotoxic, anti-neoplastic or those that pose a reproductive risk (see Hazardous Medications)
- Medications with a narrow therapeutic index (See Healthy Handout: 'Therapeutic Drug Monitoring' for more information.)
- Medications that have complex or unusual dosing and/or monitoring requirements
- May be available in multiple strengths and forms OR have look-alike or sound-alike naming or packaging to other medicines

Communication by staff with prescribers and pharmacy is required to ensure that difficulties with dosing or administration (e.g. physical, visual) or safely adhering to the medication regime are identified and resolved promptly and that regular monitoring (e.g. blood tests) are conducted as required.

See *Healthy Handout: Therapeutic Drug Monitoring* for more information.

Hazardous medications are those that due to their inherent toxicity present a danger to healthcare workers or consumers. They are identified as being carcinogenic, teratogenic, genotoxic or as having other developmental, reproductive or organ toxicity regardless of dose.

Exposure to these medications presents a risk, which may occur during preparation, administration, transportation, waste disposal and when handling patient waste (excreta). Exposure may occur through skin contact, absorption, inhalation of aerosols and drug particles, ingestion and sharps injuries.

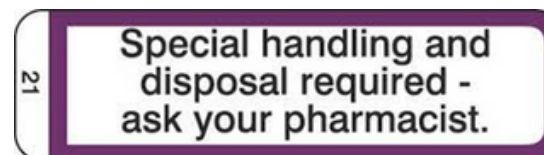
Extra vigilance is required in the handling, administration and monitoring of these medications.

When assessing risk of inadvertent exposure, the following factors need to be considered:

- Potential routes of exposure (e.g. inhalation, injury, contact)
- Who could be exposed (e.g. workers trying to conceive, pregnant or breastfeeding)
- When exposure is likely to occur (e.g. during preparation, administration)
- How often exposure is likely to occur

**Healthcare professionals, carers and patients need to be aware
of correct handling and storage of these medicines.**

ALL hazardous medications will be supplied in original packaging
and labelled with a pharmacy cautionary advisory label 21.



It's good to
be healthy.