
Reproductive Hazards for Laboratory Workers

Primary recommendations and documentation provided by OHSU Environmental Health and Radiation Safety (EHRS). Compiled and distributed by OHSU Women in Science.

Exposure to certain chemicals, biological agents, and radioactives in the laboratory may cause infertility, miscarriage, or birth defects. It is important for both men and women to understand these hazards and how to mitigate the potential risk of exposure. You can assess the hazards in your work area by obtaining the SDS for the product of concern or consult OHSU Environmental Health and Radiation Safety.

Inhalation is the most common route of exposure to chemicals in the laboratory setting. The use of engineering controls such as proper ventilation and chemical fume hoods will provide protection against inhalation hazards. Wearing acceptable PPE (i.e. lab coat, gloves, eye protection) for the chemicals being used will reduce the risk of skin absorption or ingestion of hazardous chemicals in the workplace. Exposure to chemicals below the permissible exposure limit should not present a reproductive risk. Please always use good laboratory hygiene practices when working with hazardous chemicals. Familiarize yourself with the (M)SDS for all chemicals that you and your lab members work with.

More information regarding the effects of chemicals in your workplace can be found:

- *Reproductive Health and The Workplace*: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/repro/>
- NIOSH pocket guide to Chemical Hazards: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npg/>
- ATSDR ToxFAQs: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq.html>
- HESIS: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/hesis/Pages/default.aspx>
- *The Effects of Workplace Hazards on Female Reproductive Health*: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/99-104/>

Prenatal Lab Practices

EHRS and OHSU Women in Science encourage anyone who is pregnant or considering pregnancy to undergo a personalized risk assessment of their lab space to obtain safety recommendations specific to their experiments. Personalized assessments can be confidential.

To set up an assessment you can call EHRS at 503-494-7795 or email at ehrs@ohsu.edu.

Disclaimer: EHRS representatives are not physicians and cannot give medical advice, but can provide information about chemical safety and precautions to take when working with laboratory chemicals.