

Client Information: CYTOTOXIC (ANTI-CANCER) DRUGS

Cytotoxic drugs are drugs used primarily for the treatment of cancer. They are potentially harmful if not handled with care. This information is particularly important for pregnant women. We recommend that pregnant women avoid any handling, preparation or administration of cytotoxic drugs.

Cytotoxic drugs are themselves capable of causing cancer and also birth defects and abortions. In addition, they can irritate the skin, eyes and mucous membranes on contact. Cytotoxic drugs can be absorbed through ingestion, inhalation and possibly skin absorption.

The handling of cytotoxic drugs is currently considered a hazardous task which requires special precautions to protect the safety of people who may be exposed to these drugs. People can be exposed to low doses of cytotoxic drug when preparing or giving drugs because small amounts of powder or aerosols may be released into the air if proper care is not taken.

While an animal is receiving treatment and for 48 hours after receiving some chemotherapy drugs very small amounts of drugs or broken down products may be detected in urine, faeces and vomitus. Therefore exposure to cytotoxic drugs may occur through contamination with body waste from a treated animal. Exposure to those body wastes should be avoided.

Guidelines for the safe handling of cytotoxic drugs and related waste have now been established. By using protective equipment and taking other safety precautions, exposure to cytotoxic drugs can be avoided.

The following procedures must be followed while your pet is receiving treatment with cytotoxic drugs:

1. Keep the drugs in original pack in which you received them.
2. Keep out of reach of children and pets.
3. Wear latex gloves when handling or giving tablets (see note below regarding Latex allergies). We will provide you with gloves whenever your animal is provided with medication to be administered at home.
4. Do not attempt to break up tablets or crush them for administration.

Important note: Please advise us if you have a known or suspect latex allergy or allergy to the powder found in latex gloves. Latex allergies have been found to be more common for those who already suffer from other allergies such as Asthma, Hay Fever and certain foods. You may also be more at risk of allergic reaction to Latex if you have frequent contact with Latex or have had recent or many surgical procedures.