

## **Lab Policy: Student Medical Conditions or Pregnancy**

Cape Breton University and the organizations that represent students, faculty, and staff support the efforts of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee to create and maintain a safe and healthy environment in which to study and/or work.

Lab experiments in Cape Breton University courses have been designed to minimize exposure to hazardous substances. Students who follow established safe procedures and prudent practices can work and study safely. Students who have medical conditions (allergies, asthma or other bronchial conditions), or who are contemplating pregnancy (or are pregnant), are encouraged to utilize the procedures and resources available to determine if any of the chemicals or materials used in laboratories pose any additional risk.

### **Academic Advice**

You will only receive this policy and the attached forms if the lab you are registered in has been determined to be potentially hazardous to your pregnancy or other health condition. You will receive it during the first regularly scheduled class and/or lab period.

Students who have medical concerns or who are contemplating pregnancy (or are pregnant) are encouraged to seek advice prior to registration in order to plan the inclusion of courses and labs within their academic program. Information on potential hazards in labs may be obtained from the Safety Officer or designated staff within Departments.

The University requires that students with any medical condition or pregnancy to inform the professor, lab instructor or safety officer of their medical condition/pregnancy so that an appropriate risk assessment can be performed.

Due to the uncertainty of the effects of exposure to a chemical, physical or biological agent on a fetus, it is not advisable for pregnant women to be exposed to embryotoxins, which are used in some lab experiments. If you are pregnant, **it is strongly recommended that you do not enroll in potentially hazardous labs which may expose you to radiation or agents potentially dangerous to a successful pregnancy outcome.** If you become pregnant during the semester, it is recommended that you immediately consult with the Safety Officer and discontinue the lab/course.

Students are advised that special provisions can be made to assist you in finishing the lab/course at a later date. Please see your lab instructor/faculty member for academic advice and assistance.

### **Confidentiality**

Faculty and/or Laboratory instructors who are informed about medical conditions or pregnancy will maintain confidentiality of medical information insofar as possible to protect the student's privacy.

## **DECLARATION OF STUDENT**

On the first laboratory day, all students will participate in a general laboratory safety lecture and must sign a form acknowledging the potential exposures during the laboratory component of the course. (See Appendix A) During this session, students must also declare pregnancy or other medical conditions (for example, asthma or allergies) in a confidential form which will be provided at the session. (See Appendix B)

If the condition changes during the term, the student must notify their lab instructor, professor, chemistry contact person, biology contact person or the safety officer of this change. In order to declare their medical condition, a student must provide medical documentation. It is recommended that the student also discuss his/her condition with his/her doctor to ensure that lab participation is appropriate with their condition.

## **RISK FACTORS**

### **Embryotoxins**

Embryotoxins are substances that act during pregnancy to cause adverse effects on an embryo/developing fetus. These effects may include embryoletality (death of the fertilized egg, the embryo, or the fetus), malformations (teratogenic effects), abnormal growth, and postnatal function deficits.

### **Potentially Hazardous Exposure**

Some labs that may contain chemicals or exposures to radiation, or agents potentially dangerous to a successful pregnancy outcome will be identified by the lab instructor in the first regularly scheduled lab period.

If you are pregnant or suspect you are pregnant, it is recommended that you **do not enroll** in the indicated courses/lab at this time. If you become pregnant during the semester and are enrolled in a high exposure course/lab, it is **strongly advised** you drop the course/lab and continue your studies in this course/lab at another time. Faculty and lab instructors will attempt to be as flexible as possible to allow resumption of course/lab at a later date, with credit for previously completed work given at that later date.