Reproductive Hazards in the Lab

Reproductive Hazards
The term reproductive hazard refers to agents (radiation, x-rays, chemicals or biologicals) that affect the reproductive health of women or men to have healthy children. Reproductive hazards may have harmful effects on libido, sexual behavior, or sperm or ovum development. They could also affect fertilization and the development of the ovum. While the effects of reproductive hazards may be reversible for the parent, the effects on the fetus or offspring is invariably permanent.

Researchers in academic laboratories can potentially encounter a range of reproductive and developmental hazards. This document is intended to provide some general guidelines on how laboratory workers can protect themselves from these hazards and to provide resources for further information.

Examples of reproductive hazards
Reproductive hazards are not confined to chemistry or biology laboratories. They are often in use every day – in the home, the office, in the doctor’s office, the art studio, on the stage. While these hazards seem to be everywhere, exposures can be reduced or eliminated.

For example, alcohol is a reproductive hazard, yet you can eliminate your exposure by avoiding its consumption. Heavy metals, such as mercury and lead, can be found in batteries, paint, and ink. Knowledge of the product’s ingredients can allow you to choose an alternative, which contains none of these hazardous substances. Some herbicides and pesticides have been shown to have effects on human reproductive systems. Organic solvents, such as xylene, toluene and carbon tetrachloride, are commonly used in cleaning agents, and paint removers. Read the label to find out what is in the cleaning fluid and change products if necessary.

Protection from Reproductive Hazards in the Lab
1. Become familiar with the potential reproductive hazards used in the lab.
2. Work with chemicals, especially volatile ones, in a chemical fume hood.
3. Store chemicals in sealed containers when they are not in use.
4. Immediately address any chemical spills or contaminated workspaces (e.g. the balance area).
5. Always use personal protective equipment: a lab coat, eye protection, gloves that are resistant to the chemicals being used, and other protective equipment relevant to the hazards being worked with.
6. Wash hands before eating, drinking, or smoking.
7. Notify the PI ahead of time if you are pregnant and particularly toxic reproductive hazards are being used so that extra precautions can be taken.
8. To prevent home contamination:
a. change out of contaminated clothing before going home  
b. store street clothes in a separate area to prevent contamination  
c. wash contaminated clothes separately from other laundry  
d. avoid bringing contaminated clothing or other objects home

**Your rights at CSUF**
You have the right to attend any class regardless of your reproductive status. However, it is recommended that you always find out of any potential exposures prior to class so you can make the appropriate decisions.

**For More Information**
The Effects of Workplace Hazards on Female Reproductive Health  

The Effects of Workplace Hazards on Male Reproductive Health  
[http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/malrepro.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/malrepro.html)

Pregnancy and Reproductive Health in the Workplace – UC Davis  

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