

## Chemotherapy and Home Safety

Chemotherapy (chemo) uses medication to treat cancer. During and after treatment, this medication is present in body fluids. Direct contact with body fluids at this time may cause skin irritation or other injury. This brochure will explain what precautions to take at home during and after chemo to prevent harm.

*Please talk with your physician or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.*

**It takes 7 days for your body to break down and get rid of most chemo medication.**

During this period, people and pets should avoid direct contact with the chemo medication and your:

- Blood
- Vomit
- Urine
- Stool
- Tears
- Semen and vaginal fluid

**Chemo can be harmful if it touches skin. During chemo and the 7-day period after chemo, follow these precautions.**

### Body fluids and waste precautions

In general, clean items with soap and warm water. Wear 2 pairs of disposable gloves that are chemo-safe (it will say this on the box). Use paper towels (not cloths) when cleaning spills that may be contaminated with chemo medication.

#### **Patients:**

- If possible, use a separate toilet from other family members. If this is not possible, wear 2 pairs of chemo-safe disposable gloves to clean the toilet seat after each use.
- Men should sit on the toilet to urinate. This helps prevent urine from splashing outside the toilet.
- After using the toilet, **flush it with the lid closed**. This also helps reduce splashing and ensures all traces of the chemo medication has been flushed away. Use the same precautions if vomiting into the toilet.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet.
- If any body fluids or waste contacted your skin, wash the area with soap and water.

### ***Patients, family and caregivers:***

Keep pets away from the toilet that is being used by the patient. Wear 2 pairs of gloves that are chemo safe when:

- Cleaning the toilet.
- Cleaning urine, stool or vomit.
- Changing diapers and incontinence pads. Please cleanse the patient's skin with soap and water after each diaper or pad change. (This prevents skin irritation from the chemo medication present in urine and stool.)
- Emptying and cleaning out a container with vomit.
  1. Carefully empty the container into the toilet to avoid spilling or splashing.
  2. Flush with the lid closed.
  3. Wash out the container with hot, soapy water. Empty it into the toilet and flush. Rinse and empty into the toilet. Flush.
  4. Dry the container with paper towels and dispose of them in a trash bag.

**Double bag** any trash that has come into contact with chemo medication or bodily fluids, including diapers, sanitary pads or leaking chemo medication containers or bags.

Keep any soiled laundry separate from regular laundry. This includes clothes, linens and towels that come in contact with chemo medication or bodily fluids. Wash it right after contact with soap and warm or hot water.

After using gloves:

- Wash your hands **before** removing gloves. This prevents getting fluid or waste from the gloves onto your skin.
- Put soiled gloves in the trash. Then wash your bare hands again. This can keep contaminated waste from getting on your skin.
- Wash your bare hands again to make sure the skin is free of contact with contaminated waste.

### **Sexual contact precautions**

Some chemo medication may also be found in semen and vaginal fluid.

**Please remember to use the following precautions to protect your partner during chemotherapy and for 7 days afterwards.**

- Use condoms during sex. This is for all types of sexual intercourse including oral sex.
- When your treatments are completed, talk with your physician about when you may safely try to become pregnant.
- Please know that:
  - Menstrual cycles can be irregular during and after treatment. Do not rely on your menstrual cycle as a guide to prevent pregnancy.

- Chemotherapy can have harmful side effects to an unborn child, especially in the first 3 months of pregnancy. Talk with your physician about another form of birth control to prevent pregnancy while getting chemo.

## Family safety

Physical contact with your loved ones is generally safe. Your healthcare team will tell you if your treatment requires you to avoid close contact with others.

- Hugging and kissing is safe. This includes family, friends, pregnant women and children.
- If possible, pregnant women should not clean up spills or have contact with soiled items.
- Bathrooms can be shared. However, please follow the “Body fluids and waste precautions” as explained on pages 1 and 2.

## Medication precautions

If you need to handle chemo medication (pill, liquid or intravenous form), please follow these guidelines.

Store medications as follows:

- In the original container
- Away from children and pets
- Not in the bathroom since high humidity may damage the medication
- In a sealed bag if refrigeration is needed.

When handling chemo medication:

- Wear 2 pairs of chemo-safe gloves. Wash your hands before and after removing the gloves.
- Do not crush or break open pills or capsules unless instructed by your physician.
- Pregnant women should **not** handle chemo medication.

To dispose of medications:

- Do not throw leftover medication in the trash. Put it in a plastic bag and give it to your healthcare team or follow their instructions for disposal.

## For questions

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your healthcare team:

- Ask if there is anything else to do or avoid during chemo treatment.
- Ask what side effects or problems you should report to the physician.