



Chemotherapy is a way of treating cancer using drugs or medicine. Chemotherapy kills cancer cells but can also damage normal cells. When you are having chemotherapy treatment, there is a very small chance that your family or carers could come in contact with chemotherapy drugs. It is important for you and your family to know what safety precautions you should take to reduce this risk.

## How can my chemotherapy affect other people?

After each treatment, chemotherapy drugs can stay in your body for up to a week. If you have continuous chemotherapy, the drugs will be in your body all the time until your treatment finishes.

When chemotherapy is in your body, a small amount of it can also be in your body fluids. For example, it can be in your urine and faeces when you go to the toilet, in your vomit if you are sick, and in other body fluids.

## Why is safety at home important?

Chemotherapy drugs can affect other people who come in contact with them.

**In hospital**, the nurses wear gloves and special clothing to protect them from chemotherapy drugs.

**At home**, the risk is much smaller but you still need to be careful.

If you have **any chemotherapy** you should know:

- when chemotherapy drugs could be in your body fluids, and
- how to clean up body fluids safely.

If you have **oral chemotherapy at home** you should know:

- how to store and handle your chemotherapy drugs safely.

If you have **intravenous chemotherapy at home** you should know:

- what to do if you have any problems with your pump.

## Important

**Contact your doctor or nurse immediately if you have:**

- a temperature of 38°C or higher
- chills, sweats, shivers or shakes
- a headache or stiff neck
- a sore throat, cough or cold
- shortness of breath
- sores in your mouth
- a rash or redness on your skin
- swelling, redness or tenderness, especially around a wound, a catheter site, or your rectal area
- uncontrolled diarrhoea
- pain or blood when you pass urine
- leaking from your chemotherapy pump

**If you can't contact your doctor or nurse, go to the nearest hospital emergency department for help.**

**Anyone who is pregnant or breastfeeding should not touch chemotherapy medications or body fluids that might have chemotherapy in them.**

## What are the best safety precautions?

Chemotherapy drugs can be in your body fluids for **up to 7 days** after each chemotherapy treatment. You should be careful during this time.

**Wear gloves to clean up body fluids. Always wash your hands afterwards.**

<b>Cleaning up spills of body fluid</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use disposable cloths.</li> <li>• Wash down any surfaces with soapy water.</li> <li>• Put the used cloths in a plastic bag and tie it up.</li> <li>• Put this bag inside another plastic bag and tie that up. This is called 'double bagging'.</li> <li>• Throw the bags in the bin.</li> </ul>
<b>Getting rid of other body fluids</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Double bag' any incontinence pads, nappies, catheter bags or stoma bags, before throwing them away.</li> </ul>
<b>Washing clothing or bedding with body fluids on</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash any clothing or bedding straight away.</li> <li>• Wash them separately on a long washing machine cycle.</li> </ul>
<b>Vomiting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a plastic bowl, or a plastic bag with no holes.</li> <li>• If you use a bowl, wash it out with soap and water afterwards. Don't use it for anything else. Throw it out when your treatment has finished.</li> </ul>
<b>Going to the toilet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit down to use the toilet.</li> <li>• Close the lid afterwards.</li> <li>• Flush using a full flush.</li> </ul>
<b>Having sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a condom to protect your partner from your body fluids.</li> </ul>

## What if I'm having chemotherapy at home?

### Oral chemotherapy

- Take the tablets or capsules exactly how your doctor or nurse tells you to.
- Keep them in a safe place away from children and animals.
- If you are having problems taking the tablets, call your doctor or nurse to ask for advice.
- Don't chew, break or crush tablets or capsules.
- Other people should wear gloves if they need to help you take the tablets.

### Intravenous chemotherapy through a pump

- Your doctor or nurse will explain how the pump works, and what to do if you have any problems.

**If you have any questions, talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.**

## Common questions

### Can I hug and touch my family?

Yes, it is safe to touch other people, and to hug and cuddle your family.

### What gloves should I use to clean up body fluids?

You can use disposable gloves or washing up gloves.

#### Disposable plastic gloves

- Most supermarkets sell these in packs.
- Be careful not to touch the outside of the gloves when you take them off.
- Throw them away after you have cleaned up.
- Wash your hands.

#### Washing up gloves

- Don't use them for anything else.
- Keep them just for cleaning up vomit during the chemotherapy treatment.
- Wash the outside before you take them off and dry them inside out.
- Keep them in a plastic bag away from children or animals.
- Throw them out when the chemotherapy treatment is finished.

## Things to ask your doctor or nurse

- ✓ When should I call you?
- ✓ What things do I need to do at home?
- ✓ When could chemotherapy be in my body fluids?

### Contact numbers:

Daytime: .....

Night/weekend: .....

## Glossary

**Chemotherapy** = treatment for cancer using drugs or medicines

**Intravenous chemotherapy** = chemotherapy you have into a vein through a drip or pump

**Oral chemotherapy** = chemotherapy you have by mouth as tablets or capsules that you swallow

**Body fluids** = fluids (liquids) produced by your body, including faeces (bowel motion/poo), urine (wee), vomit, vaginal secretions and semen.

## Working together to lessen the impact of cancer

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