

Safe Management of Chemotherapy Medications in the Home:

You are receiving this information because you are taking chemotherapy medications or have recently received chemotherapy at your cancer center.

Regardless of whether your chemotherapy is given by injection or taken by mouth, these medications remain in your blood, saliva, vomit urine, stool, vaginal fluids, and semen for a long time.

Safe handling precautions are advised to be followed for up to 48 hours after your last dose of chemotherapy treatment. If you are on daily oral chemotherapy, you need to use these special precautions the whole time you are taking the oral chemotherapy until at least 48 hours after your last chemotherapy dose.

How to safely handle medications: Chemotherapy medications can be hazardous.

Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling chemotherapy

Prepare your medication in an area away from where food is prepared.

Avoid drafty areas such as an open window as this may spread any tiny amounts of chemotherapy.

It is safe for the person with cancer to handle their own chemotherapy without gloves. This is the best option.

When someone other than the person receiving the chemotherapy is handling chemotherapy, that person should always wear chemotherapy protective gloves. If you use rubber gloves, wash the outside with soapy water before removing them. If you use disposable gloves, remove them carefully, turning them inside out, then seal them in a plastic bag and put in your garbage. You can speak with your Health Care Provider about getting any required supplies.

Storage of Medication in the Home

Store your medications in a safe place, out of reach of children and pets.

Do not store medications in the bathroom, as high humidity may damage the drugs.

Check labels to see if your medications should be kept in the refrigerator or protected from light. Keep your medication in its original container.

Sharps are to be disposed of in a rigid plastic container with a lid or in a “sharps” container. Full containers can be returned to your local pharmacy or to CancerCare Manitoba.

Body Wastes

Please sit when you use the toilet and flush twice with the lid closed. This helps prevent splashing of fluids.

Wash your hands well with regular soap and water afterwards.

Wash your skin with soap and water if body fluids or waste gets on your skin to protect yourself from potential harm.

Precautions must be taken with diapers/incontinence products/feminine hygiene products. Empty solid waste into the toilet and flush twice with the toilet lid closed. Double bag any disposable products in plastic bags and put it into the garbage.

Laundry

Wash your clothing or linen normally.

If your laundry becomes soiled with chemotherapy medication and/or body fluids you should wash your laundry separately and take precautions. If family or friend is doing your laundry they should put on chemotherapy protective gloves and handle the laundry carefully.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it safe for family members to have contact with me while I am taking chemotherapy medications?

- Eating together, enjoying favorite activities, hugging and kissing are safe for yourself and others.

Is it safe for my caregiver or family member to handle my chemotherapy medication?

- Ideally the person taking the chemotherapy should be the one handling the chemotherapy. Family or friends should wear chemotherapy protective gloves if they are directly handling tablets/medications.

Is it safe for my family to use the same toilet?

- Yes

What if I vomit?

- Your caregiver should wear chemotherapy- protective gloves when cleaning.

Is it safe to be sexually active during my treatment?

- Everyone should discuss questions about sexual activity and pregnancy with their health care team. Preventing pregnancy is very important.

Can I travel with my chemotherapy medication?

- Yes, usually, travelling is no problem. Some chemotherapy medications require special storage (such as refrigeration) and you may need to make special arrangements.
- Carry your medication with you and do not pack in checked baggage.
- Always travel with your medication in its original packaging including the pharmacy label.