

Cancer Medicines: Safe Handling at Home

This handout talks about how to safely handle cancer medicines and body waste (bowel movements, urine, vomit, body fluids, or drainage) for people receiving cancer treatment. These guidelines are for you and your family members to follow **during and for 48 hours after** your cancer treatment.

Equipment and Medicines:

Gloves

- Wear disposable nitrile gloves (you can buy these at any drug store) when touching and disposing of cancer medicines. This includes oral pills. Wash your hands with soap and water before putting the gloves on and after taking the gloves off. Discard the gloves with the chemotherapy waste container after one use.



Needles and syringes

- Never put the cap back onto a needle. There is a chance you might puncture, injure or stick yourself.
- Place used needles and syringes in a puncture-proof container (“sharps” container). Some examples are an empty laundry detergent bottle or empty coffee can. A “sharps container” may be provided by your healthcare team.



IV bags and tubing

- Place IV bags and tubing in a leak-proof plastic trash bag. Then, put this bag inside a second bag. This process is called “double-bagging.”
- A yellow plastic container for disposing of chemotherapy may be provided by your healthcare team. If the waste is too large to fit in the plastic container, place it in a separate plastic bag and seal it tightly with rubber bands.
- Speak with your healthcare team about proper disposal. Regulations vary for different communities.



Cancer medicines

- Avoid splashing when throwing out or emptying these items.
- Store medicines in a safe place and away from others especially children and pets. Do not store chemotherapy medicines in the bathroom, as high humidity may damage the medicines. Check medicine labels to see if your medicine should be kept in the refrigerator or away from light. Be sure all medicines have complete instruction labels.



Body Waste: Cancer medicines may be released in body waste. You and your family members should follow these guidelines when touching toilets, commodes, bedpans, vomit pans, urinals, ostomy bags or any other body waste containers. If possible, you should use a separate bathroom from others in the home for 48 hours after receiving chemotherapy.

- Wear disposable gloves when emptying or cleaning toilets, body waste containers or changing diapers (adult “Depends[®]”). You can buy these gloves at any drug store. Remove the gloves and then wash your hands.
- Empty containers of body waste into the toilet. Empty the contents close to the water to avoid splashing.
- To avoid splattering urine, men and women should urinate by sitting down on the toilet.
- Flush the toilet twice with the lid down after each use.
- Clean the toilet bowl, lid and any additional splashes with detergent and water or cleansing wipes.

- Clean body waste containers after each use with soap and water. Ostomy bags only need to be cleaned once a day and emptied as needed.
- If you use diapers, use disposable diapers. Place them in a separate bag and dispose in trash.
- Keep this trash away from children and pets.

Trash: Trash that has been in contact with cancer medicine or body waste must be handled carefully.

Follow these safety guidelines:

- Wear disposable gloves to throw away soiled trash.
- Soiled trash should be placed in leak proof plastic bags and double-bagged.
- Remove the gloves and wash your hands.

Laundry: Follow these guidelines to care for laundry for 48 hours after receiving chemotherapy:

- After receiving chemotherapy, separate your laundry from other laundry by placing it in a plastic bag or pillowcase. Always wash your hands after handling your laundry.
- Others handling your laundry should wear disposable gloves.
- Wash laundry twice. Use normal detergent and hot or warm water.
- Laundry soiled with chemo or bodily fluids, such as urine, stool, or vomit should be washed right away.
 - If it can't be washed right away, put it in a plastic bag or pillow case. Wash it as soon as possible. Wash soiled laundry twice, separately from household items. Use normal detergent and hot or warm water.
 - Discard disposable diapers in plastic bags to prevent leakage.
 - Remove and throw away the gloves and then wash your hands.

Skin and Eye Contact: Avoid letting cancer medicines and body waste touch your skin or eyes.

If your **skin** comes in direct contact with cancer medicine and/or body waste:

- Remove any contaminated garments
- Immediately wash your skin with soap and water for five minutes. Call your healthcare team if the skin stays red or irritated more than one hour.

If your **eye(s)** come in direct contact with cancer medicines and/or body waste:

- Flush your eye(s) with water or saline for at least fifteen minutes.
- Call your healthcare team right away.

Sexual Intimacy: Cancer medicines may be released in body fluids (such as semen or vaginal secretions) that are present during sexual activities. You and your partner must use condoms (or barrier) for oral sex and intercourse.

Cancer Medicine Spills

If cancer medicines are accidentally splashed or spilled, follow these steps in order:

1. Do not touch the spilled drug with bare hands.
2. Open the spill kit and put two gloves on each hand.
3. Put on the gown so it closes in the back.
4. Put on the face shield and respirator mask.
5. Use the spill pads or towels to control the spill by putting them around the puddle to form a “V”.
6. Soak up as much of the spilled drug as possible.
7. Put the pads or towels into the waste bag from the spill kit. Do not put them down anywhere.
8. Use the scoop to pick up any broken glass and place it in the box from the spill kit. Put the box in the waste bag.
9. While still wearing the gloves, gown, face shield, and mask, wash the area with dishwashing or laundry detergent and water and disposable cloths or paper towels.
10. Put the used cloths in the waste bag.
11. Rinse the area with water using clean cloths.
12. Place all used cloths in the waste bag.
13. Remove the face shield, mask, gown, gloves and place them in the waste bag and close it.
14. Place the first waste bag into a second waste bag and close it.
15. Wash your hands with soap and water.

16. If the spill occurs on sheets or clothing, handle them with gloves and wash them separately from other laundry.
17. **All cancer medicine spills MUST be reported.** Call both the home health nurse and Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey nurse triage line at 732-235-2465.

If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.