

Chemotherapy Safety At Home

Chemotherapy helps by destroying cancer cells. However, they can damage healthy cells as well. Hence, it is crucial to reduce the possibility of others coming in contact with your chemotherapy medicines. This also includes avoiding contact with your body fluids as they may contain chemotherapy drugs.

Chemotherapy safety and body fluids

Body fluids such as blood, urine, vomit and faeces are liquids from our body. When you are undergoing chemotherapy, the medications may remain in these body fluids during treatment and even after the treatment for a period of time.

Most chemotherapy drugs tend to remain in body fluids for around 48 hours after each treatment. However, some medications can persist in body fluids for up to seven days. If you have to undergo chemotherapy regularly, the medications may remain in your body fluids throughout the treatment period.

Hence, it is crucial to prevent other people, especially children and pregnant or breastfeeding women, from coming in contact with chemotherapy medicines and your body fluids.

When do I need to take precautions?

Patients need to take a few precautions when undergoing chemotherapy both in the hospital and at home.

Both during and for 48 hours after chemotherapy sessions, patients need to take precautions with body fluids. People who receive chemotherapy that remains in the body fluids for longer will need to take precautions for a longer period of time. Our doctors and nurses will advise you how long you must take these precautions for.

Having chemotherapy at home

You may receive chemotherapy at home. If so, you should follow the precautions in this information advice.

- Follow the directions on the label regarding safe storage. Store all capsules and tablets away from children.
- Inform our doctor or nurse if you develop any problems while taking chemotherapy drugs.
- If you need to use a pump for chemotherapy, our staff will explain how it works and what to do should you encounter any issues. If you notice leakage or spillage from your pump, stop the pump immediately and contact our clinic for further instructions.

Precautions to be taken at home

It is essential to reduce the chances of family members and carers coming in contact with your body fluids. Our nurses can advise you which precautions to use depending on your treatment.

Disclaimer:

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Precautions to be taken when undergoing Chemotherapy at home

Using the toilet

- Sit when using the toilet.
- Close the lid before flushing.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with water and soap.

Disposing of incontinence pads and nappies

- Wear disposable gloves and place these items in a plastic bag.
- Place these gloves in the same bag before securely tying it and throwing it into a bin.
- Wash your hands with water and soap after disposing of this bag.

Managing vomit

Use a small bucket or a plastic bag to vomit into.

Small Bucket

- Use disposable gloves to empty the contents of the bucket into the toilet.
- Wash the bucket with soap and water and dry with paper towels.
- Place used gloves into a plastic bag and throw it in a bin. Wash your hands with water and soap.
- Do not use this bucket for any other purpose.
- Dispose of the bucket once your treatment is over.

Plastic Bag

- Check the plastic bag to ensure there are no holes.
- Securely tie it before discarding it in a bin.
- Wash your hands with water and soap.

Precautions for the spills of body fluids

Cleaning body fluids that spilled onto objects and surfaces:

- Wear disposable gloves and soak up the spill using paper towels.
- Use soapy water and a disposable cloth to disinfect contaminated surfaces.
- Place soiled gloves, paper towels, and disposable cloths in a plastic bag and dispose in a bin.
- Wash your hands with water and soap.

Washing towels, clothes, and bedding that have come into contact with body fluids:

- Use disposable gloves and wash these items immediately. In case this is not possible, place them in a plastic bag and seal it to be cleaned later on.
- Discard disposable gloves by placing them in a plastic bag and throwing it in a bin.
- Wash these items separately and on the longest cycle of your washing machine in either cold or hot water.
- If possible, dry them outside. After which, the items can be used as normal.

Contact with the skin or eyes

- If your skin is affected, wash the affected area with soap and water immediately. If irritation or redness occurs, contact our doctor for further advice.
- If your eyes are affected, rinse them with water or artificial tears (eyewash) for 15 minutes. Inform our doctor immediately or visit the nearest emergency department for further help.

Protection during sexual intercourse

- Chemotherapy drugs may harm an unborn baby. Hence, you and your partner should follow birth control measures to prevent pregnancy during chemotherapy treatment.
- Use condoms or other barrier methods of contraception if you have any form of sexual intercourse after a chemotherapy session to reduce exposure of your partner to these drugs found in vaginal fluids or semen. You should follow these precautions for 48 hours after each session. However, sometimes it may take up to seven days for some drugs to clear from body fluids. Check with our doctor if you are unsure.

Can I touch and hug my family?

- Yes, it is safe to touch, hug, or cuddle your family. However, remember to keep them away from body fluids.

Can other people share the same toilet?

- Yes, other people may use the same toilet as you. Should body fluids get on to the toilet seat, wear disposable gloves to clean the area using soapy water before any other person uses it.