

Chemotherapy safety at home

Chemotherapy (chemo) is using drugs to kill or stop cancer cells from growing. Chemo can also damage normal cells. It is important to prevent chemotherapy from touching you and others by mistake. Chemo can stay in the body up to 7 days. All of the chemo is not entirely used by the body. Chemo leaves the body through vomit, blood, sweat, urine (pee), stool (poo), vaginal fluid and semen. These body wastes may contain small amounts of chemo.

The actual risk of harm is quite low, but there are safety measures that you should take.

This handout describes tips to safely handle body waste at home after chemotherapy. By following these tips, you can lessen the chance of exposing yourself and others to these drugs.



- If there is chance of coming into contact with items contaminated with chemo, you, your caregiver or your home care provider must wear gloves.
- If during treatment you call EMS (911) or a transport service, visit your dentist or another health care provider (eg. Emergency Department), tell them that you are on chemotherapy treatment.

How do I clean up body wastes?

- Clean up as soon as you can. Keep pets and those not helping with the clean up away from the area.
- Family members and caregivers should always wear disposable gloves (2 pairs if possible for extra protection) when:
 - ✓ helping to change adult briefs or pads and when handling soiled items.
 - ✓ emptying bedpans or containers

*You can buy disposable gloves at your local drug store
- Put body wastes from soiled items into the toilet. Close the lid and flush the toilet 2 times.
- Avoid splashing while emptying into the toilet. Rinse bedpans or containers well with detergent and water. Put rinse water in the toilet. Close the lid and flush the toilet 2 times.

How do I clean up body wastes?

- Use paper towels, disposable cloths or toilet paper to wipe up any spilled waste. Clean the area very well with a household cleaner and rinse.
- Double bag disposable items, adult briefs or pads, and cleanup supplies. Be sure to store garbage in a safe place, away from children and pets. Dispose in regular garbage.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after removing gloves.

How do I wash articles soiled with body fluids?

- Articles soiled with body fluids (for up to 7 days after your last dose of chemo) should be washed immediately in your washing machine with hot water and regular detergent, separate from your other laundry. Run the wash cycle twice. If not soiled with body fluids, they may be washed with regular laundry.

Is it safe to have sex while on chemo?

- Yes it is.
- There may be traces of chemo in vaginal fluid and semen for up to 7 days after treatment. The use of condoms is recommended during sexual intercourse to protect your partner. Please talk to your doctor or nurse about your concerns.

Other safety tips

- Always wash your hand before eating and drinking.
- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should avoid handling body fluids or waste.



Being with loved ones is an important part of life. Eating together, enjoying favourite activities, hugging and kissing are all safe.