

Your Health Education

Administering Chemotherapy at Home

If you are receiving chemotherapy at home, you must take precautions to avoid unnecessary exposure to you and your family from the drug. There is no danger to others from usual contact with you by hugging, kissing, or sharing food. But exposure to the drug or your body wastes may present a hazard.

Storing Medications

Keep all medications in a safe place away from children and pets. Follow the instructions on the medication label for storage. If medicines are to be refrigerated, do not place them on the shelf nearest the freezer. It is best to place them in a zip-lock bag in the crisper bin. Do not keep the medications in your bathroom because the high humidity can cause changes in the drugs.

Medicine Taken by Mouth

Wash your hands after handling your pills. Caretakers should not touch the pills with bare hands and should wear latex gloves. If you are taking the medication for more than one day, take it at approximately the same time each day.

Injectable Medication

Prepare the medication while wearing latex gloves to avoid skin irritation. If you are replacing a cassette/cartridge in a pump, discard the old cassette and tubing and alcohol wipes into the plastic container marked "chemotherapy waste."

Needles and syringes must also be placed in the plastic chemotherapy sharps container.

Alcohol wipes, dressings, and other medical supplies that come in contact with chemotherapy are discarded in a plastic bag.

Removal of Chemotherapy Materials

The infusion company that supplied your injectable chemotherapy will provide you with containers or bags for materials that came in contact with your chemotherapy. Call the company when the bags are 2/3 full.

Drug Spills

To clean up spills from a hard surface like a table or floor, wear two pairs of latex gloves, and wear eyeglasses or other inexpensive protective eye wear. Absorb the spill with absorbent paper towels. Wash the area 3 times with soap and water, and dispose of all materials in the plastic chemotherapy waste container.

If any of the drug is spilled on bed linens or clothing, wash the soiled items as soon as possible. If you cannot wash them immediately, place them in a plastic bag. When you take the items out of the bag to wash them, throw the bag in the chemotherapy waste container. The soiled items should be washed separately from your other laundry. You do not need to change your type of laundry powder or your usual way of washing. The soiled items should be washed twice before using them again. They may be washed with other things for the second washing.

If any of the drug splashes in someone's eye, flush the eye with water for 15 minutes. Call the doctor who prescribed the drug immediately. If at all possible, have someone call the doctor while the eye is being flushed. Tell the doctor what has happened and ask for further instructions.

Creams or Pastes

This type of medication is applied directly on the skin. Do not handle the chemotherapy cream or paste with your bare hands. Wear latex gloves and wash your hands with soap and water after you remove the gloves. Discard any chemotherapy waste in the plastic chemotherapy container. If you do not have a container, place the waste in a zip-lock bag, and take it to your doctor's office when you return for your visit.

Pregnant Women

Women who are pregnant or breast-feeding should avoid handling chemotherapy drugs or cleaning up spills.