

# Your Health Education

## Oral Chemotherapy

Your doctor has prescribed chemotherapy that you will take orally. Your medication will either be a capsule or a tablet.

Your doctor or nurse will tell you when to take the medication, if it should be taken with or without food, and if you should avoid certain foods, or other medications (such as other-the counter-medications), when you are taking it.

You will receive printed sheets of information which explain the possible side effects and how to prevent or treat them at home.

### You will be told:

- What side effects to report immediately to your doctor or nurse.
- What to do if you miss a dose.
- What to do if you vomit less than 30 minutes after swallowing the drug.
- What to do if you are unable to swallow your pills or capsule.
- What to do with leftover pills and capsules when you are no longer taking the medication.
- How to store your medication.

### Storage

If refrigerated, do not place medications on the shelf nearest the freezer. Place in a zip-lock bag in the crisper bin.

- Do not store medications in a bathroom with a shower because high humidity can cause damage.

### Important safety concerns when taking oral chemotherapy medications at home:

- Keep all medications in a safe place away from children and pets.
- There is no danger to others from contact with you by hugging, kissing, or sharing food.
- Wash your hands before and after you touch your medications.
- Caregivers should not touch the pills with bare hands and should wear latex gloves.

After chemotherapy treatment, the medication usually remains in the body for either three or seven days, depending upon its chemical properties. It is excreted in the urine, stool, vomit, semen, and vaginal secretions during this time.

Your doctor or nurse will tell you how many days your body fluids are possibly harmful if direct skin contact occurs. If urine, stool, or vomit comes in contact with your hands or other body parts, wash the area immediately with soap and water. If caretakers have contact with your body wastes, they should wear latex gloves. After using the toilet, flush it immediately. If you have young children or pets in the home that may have contact with the toilet, flush the toilet twice. The use of condoms is recommended for three or seven days after therapy to protect your partner from exposure to chemotherapy in your body fluids.

### If you are unable to swallow pills:

- Ask your doctor if you can crush your pills or open your capsules. **DO NOT do this without asking your doctor first!**
- Find an area that is away from air flow such as from a fan, air conditioner, or window, and away from where food is prepared.
- Cover the work area with a plastic, disposable cloth or mat.
- Wash your hands.
- Mix crushed pills or the contents of an open capsule with applesauce, juice, or flavored syrup.
- After mixing, place all items used to mix the medication into a zip-lock bag and then place the sealed bag in a sealed, hard plastic container such as a detergent bottle. This includes the open capsule pieces, the stirrers, gloves, mat, and any other clean-up materials.
- Throw the container in your household trash.

If you have questions, please contact your doctor or nurse.