

Home Safety During or After Chemotherapy Treatments

If you are going home on a chemotherapy agent, or you have received chemotherapy in the last 48 hours, you and your caregivers will need to take special precautions when handling your body fluids. This includes urine, stool, sweat, mucus, blood, vomit, and sexual fluids. These precautions will protect you or others from coming into contact with small amounts of chemotherapy byproducts. Most chemotherapy medications will be out of your body in less than 48 hours after your last dose.

We have outlined general precautions that you should follow while you are on chemotherapy and for 48 hours after you complete your chemotherapy. **You can buy needed materials** such as gowns and Nitrile gloves at the Home Care Services Retail store in the Taubman Center, located on the first floor in Reception F, or from a medical supply company.

While you are on chemotherapy or for 48 hours after your last dose, you and your caregivers should follow the safety measures below:

Body wastes

- Small amounts of chemotherapy are present in your body fluids and body waste. If any part of your body is exposed to any body fluids or wastes, wash the exposed area with soap and water.
- People in your household may use the same toilet as you, as long as you flush all waste down the toilet twice with the lid down. Consider using a plastic blue pad to cover the inside of the lid during flushes and replace it after each use.

- If you use a commode, bedpan, urinal or a basin for vomiting, wear Nitrile gloves when clearing out the waste. Rinse the container with water and clean it at least once a day with soap and water.
- If you do not have control of your bladder or bowels, use a disposable, plastic-backed pad, diaper, or sheet to soak up urine or stool. When it becomes soiled, change the protective item right away and wash the skin with soap and water. Place any diapers, pads, and gloves soiled with body wastes into a securely fastened plastic bag, then double bag it and place it with your regular trash.
- If you have an ostomy, wear Nitrile gloves when emptying and changing the ostomy appliance for 48 hours after your last dose.
- Wear a disposable gown if there is any chance of splashing during disposal of body wastes, or exposure while handling soiled linens. If body wastes splash into your eye(s), flush eye(s) right away with water for 10 to 15 minutes and call your oncology provider.

Laundry

These are the precautions you or your caregivers need to take when doing laundry contaminated with chemotherapy or bodily fluids:

- Use Nitrile gloves to handle laundry soiled with chemotherapy, vomit, urine, or stool to keep it from touching your skin. Wash it separately. Do not wash it with other household clothes, towels, etc. Use hot water, soap and bleach. Run it through the washer twice.
- If you cannot wash your linens or clothing right away, double-bag them in plastic garbage bags and keep them separate from other household laundry.
- After your clothing or linens have been washed, throw away the plastic bags in your regular trash as soon as possible.
- Wear a gown when there is a chance for splashing or exposure to body wastes.

Always wash hands with soap and water after any contact with chemotherapy or body wastes, even if you wore Nitrile gloves.

Pregnant and/or breast-feeding caregivers

Pregnant or breast-feeding women should wear Nitrile gloves and a gown when caring for a person who is getting chemotherapy.

Sexual activity and pregnancy

Do not have sexual activity for 48 hours after getting chemotherapy because body fluids may contain chemotherapy. It is very important that you or your partner do not get pregnant while getting chemotherapy. You should use two forms of birth control to avoid pregnancy during treatment and for at least six months after your last treatment. Call your doctor if pregnancy occurs.

Medication precautions

- If you handle chemotherapy agents, please keep the medication in its original container.
- Keep the container away from children or pets.
- Wash your hands after touching the medication. Caregivers should wear Nitrile gloves when handling any chemotherapy medications.
- If applicable, please ask your healthcare provider how you should properly dispose of your medication. Do not dispose of it in the general trash.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Chelsea Harding, BSN, RN, OCN, ENC
Adapted from "What to Expect - A Guide to Cancer Infusion Therapy"

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License](#). Last Revised 12/2018