



Cancer Medicines: Safe Handling at Home

This handout is about how to safely handle cancer medicines and body waste (bowel movements, urine, vomit, body fluids, or drainage) for people getting cancer treatment. These guidelines are for you and your family members to follow **during and for 48 hours after** your cancer treatment.

Equipment and Medicines

Equipment (needles, syringes, IV bags and IV tubing):

- Never put the cap back onto a needle. There is a chance you might stick yourself.
- Place used needles and syringes in a puncture-proof container. A container such as an empty coffee can that has the lid sealed with tape is one option. The container you use to dispose of needles and syringes may be called a “sharps” container.
- Place IV bags and tubing in a leak-proof plastic trash bag. Then, put this bag inside a second bag. This process is called “double-bagging.”
- Speak with your nurse about proper disposal. Regulations vary for different communities.

Medications (chemotherapy, cancer medicines):

- Wear disposable gloves (you can buy these at any drug store) when touching cancer treatments. This includes oral pills.
- Wash your hands after removing the gloves.
- Avoid splashing when throwing out or emptying these items.
- Store medications in a safe place and away from others (especially children and pets).

Body Waste

Cancer medicines may be released in body waste. You and your family members should follow these guidelines when touching toilets, commodes, bedpans, vomit pans, urinals and ostomy bags, or any other body waste containers.

- Wear disposable gloves when emptying or cleaning toilets, body waste containers or changing diapers (such as “Depends®” for adults). You can buy these gloves at any drug store. Remove the gloves and then wash your hands.
- Empty containers of body waste into the toilet. Empty the contents close to the water to avoid splashing.
- Flush the toilet twice with the lid down after use.
- Clean the toilet bowl in the usual manner. Clean up splashes with soap and water.
- Clean body waste containers after each use with soap and water. Rinse well. Ostomy bags only need to be cleaned once a day and emptied as needed.
- If you use diapers, use disposable diapers. Place them in a separate bag and dispose in trash.
 - Keep this trash away from children and pets.
- To avoid splattering urine, men and women should urinate by sitting down on the toilet.

Trash

Trash that has been in contact with cancer medicine or body waste must be handled carefully. Follow these safety guidelines:

- Wear disposable gloves to throw away soiled trash.
- Soiled trash should be placed in leak proof plastic bags and double-bagged.
- Remove the gloves and wash your hands.

Laundry

Clothes may become soiled by body waste. Follow these guidelines to care for soiled laundry:

- Soiled laundry should be washed right away. If it can't be washed right away, put it in a plastic bag or pillowcase. Wash it as soon as possible.
- Wear disposable gloves to handle soiled laundry and place soiled laundry in the washer.
- Remove the gloves and then wash your hands.
- Wash soiled laundry twice, separately from household items. Use normal detergent and hot or warm water.

Spills

The following guidelines should be followed if cancer medicine or body waste is accidentally splashed or spilled:

- Put on gloves.
- Soak up the spill with paper towels.
- Clean spill area with soap and water using paper towels. Rinse well.
- Follow guidelines for handling of laundry, and trash.
- Remove the gloves and then wash your hands.

Skin and Eye Contact

Avoid letting cancer medicines and body waste touch your skin or eyes. If your skin comes in direct contact with cancer medicine:

- Wash your skin with soap and water for five minutes. Call your healthcare team if the skin stays red more than one hour. Also call your healthcare team if the skin becomes irritated.

If your eyes come in direct contact with cancer medicine:

- Flush your eye with water for five minutes. Call your healthcare team right away.

Sexual Intimacy

Throughout cancer treatment, pregnancy **MUST** be avoided due to the medicines in your body. Birth control methods should be used at all times.

Cancer medicines may be released in body fluids (such as semen or vaginal secretions) that are present during sexual activities. You and your partner should use condoms (or barrier) for oral sex and intercourse. Kissing **does not** put you or your partner at risk.

If you are having problems during business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), please call 406-435-7330 and speak to the nurse at the Cancer Center. If it is after business hours, on a holiday or weekend, please ask the operator to page the doctor on call.