



Your health and safety  
remains our top priority.

## During Cancer Treatment - **Handling hazardous drugs safely at home**

Your treatment plan may include medicine used to destroy cancer cells. By working safely with these drugs, you can lessen the chance of exposing yourself, your family and friends, and the environment to these chemicals.

### **Precautions to protect you and others caring for you:**

- Wash your hands before and after handling hazardous drugs.
- Wear disposable nitrile gloves (not latex) when handling any type of hazardous drugs. Do not use torn or punctured gloves.
- Place a plastic-backed, absorbent pad under the work area if changing pump cassettes, tubing, or when handling hazardous drugs.
- Check intravenous (I.V.) connections regularly to make sure that they are secure.
- Check infusion pump regularly to make sure it is infusing without difficulty.
- Discard any used gloves in a plastic bag. Tie or seal the plastic bag and place in your household trash bag for disposal.

### **Drug storage precautions:**

- Your nurse will tell you about special storage instructions.
- If the drug needs refrigeration, do not place it in or near the freezer, and separate it from other foods (for example, use a crisper bin or place the medication in a container).
- Keep all drugs out of the reach of children, pets and away from food.

### **Safety precautions when cancer treatment is in pill form:**

- Do not crush, break, or chew medication.
- Wear disposable gloves when handling hazardous pills. Hands must be washed before and after contact with the pill
- Store in original container, at room temperature, away from excessive heat and moisture.
- Do not use the same container or pill box for other medications.
- If your medication requires refrigeration, store separate from food in a sealed bag.
- Empty pill bottles from hazardous drugs should not be recycled or reused to store other pills or items.

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### **Skin care contact precautions:**

- Hazardous drugs spilled on your skin may cause irritation. Wash the area thoroughly with soap and water, dry the area, and contact your doctor. Observe the skin for the next 7 days. If redness or skin irritation occurs, contact your doctor.
- If the drug splashes into your eye, flush the eye with tap water for at least 15 minutes and contact your doctor.

### **Waste disposal precautions:**

- You may use the bathroom as usual. Wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet.
- Toilets should be double-flushed with lid down 48 hours after receiving hazardous drugs.
- All caregivers must wear nitrile gloves when handling your sweat soaked linens and clothing or your blood, urine, stool, or vomit for 48 hours after you receive hazardous drugs.
- After using any devices for bodily waste, thoroughly wash hands and the devices.
- Place diapers in “zip-lock” plastic bags for disposal, for 48 hours after receiving hazardous drugs.

### **Medication spill precautions:**

- If you suspect a leak or spill of the hazardous drug, immediately stop the infusion pump and use clamps to clamp the catheter line.
- Clean small hazardous drug spills (less than 1 teaspoon) immediately. Wear two pairs of nitrile gloves from the spill kit and blot the spill dry with a gauze pad. Clean the area three times with soap and water.
- For larger spills, follow the instructions on the spill kit. Clean the spill area three times with soap and water and dispose of the gauze pads in specially marked chemotherapy waste bags contained in the home spill kit. Seal the waste bag securely and return to the nursing unit or clinic for disposal.
- Immediately take off clothing soiled with hazardous drugs or soiled with body fluids (blood, urine, feces, vomit, or drenching sweat).
- When handling bed linens or clothing which have been soiled by hazardous drugs or body fluids, do not touch the soiled area with your bare hands. Wear nitrile gloves and a gown. Immediately place the linens or clothing in the washing machine. Wash items in hot water, separate from other laundry. If you are unable to wash these items immediately, place them in a sealed plastic bag until they can be washed.
- Call your nurse/doctor for further instruction.

### **Frequent questions:**

- **Is it safe for family to have contact with you during hazardous drug treatment?** Yes. Eating together, enjoying favorite activities, hugging and kissing are all safe.
- **Is it safe to have sex during hazardous drug treatment?** Ask your doctor or Oncology RN. It is possible that traces of hazardous drugs may be present in vaginal fluid and semen for up to 48 hours after treatment. Special precautions may be needed.