

Questions & Answers

Is it safe for my family members to be in contact with me during chemotherapy?

Yes. Eating together, enjoying favourite activities, hugging and kissing are all safe.

Is it safe for women who are pregnant to handle chemotherapy or body fluids?

Pregnant women should not have direct contact with your medicine or contaminated wastes.

Is it all right for my family to use the same toilet as I do?

Yes. As long as any contaminated waste is cleaned from the toilet, sharing is safe.

What if I use a bedpan, commode or urinal?

If you use these, have your caregiver wear household rubber gloves when emptying the basin and rinse with water after use. Wash the basin at least once a day with soap and water.

Is it safe to be sexually active during my treatment?

Most often yes; however, special precautions may need to be taken. We know that chemotherapy is present in urine, stool and vomit during and for 48 hours after treatment. It is probable that traces of chemotherapy are also present in vaginal fluid and semen. Ask your doctor or nurse if special precautions, such as using a condom, are necessary.

What happens if I vomit after 48 hours?

After 48 hours, your urine, stool and vomit will no longer contain chemotherapy.

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or email pchem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **FE.224.M43**

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Chemotherapy and Safety in the Home

Patient Information

Medical Outpatient
Lions Gate Hospital

231 East 15th Street
North Vancouver BC V7L 2L7
Tel: 604-988-3131

The purpose of chemotherapy is to kill or to stop cancer cells from growing. Chemotherapy may also damage normal cells. Special precautions must be taken to prevent chemotherapy from coming into accidental contact with you and with other people. The following information teaches you and your family how to avoid unnecessary exposure to chemotherapy and how to properly handle wastes.

Chemotherapy is a Hazardous Waste

Chemotherapy medicine and equipment (syringes, needles, etc.) are considered to be contaminated. Chemotherapy is not entirely used by your body and is excreted in your urine, stool and vomit. These wastes contain small amounts of chemotherapy, therefore, the following precautions are taken during your chemotherapy treatment and for 48 hours after it ends.

Home Supplies

For chemotherapy medicine received at home:

- Labelled Plastic Bag
- Plastic Bag with Gloves

For body fluids:

- A pair of household rubber gloves.

Disposing of Chemotherapy Equipment

(syringes, needles, etc.) if you receive chemotherapy medicine at home

1. All equipment that comes into contact with this medicine is placed into the labelled plastic bag provided by the hospital. This bag is then returned to the hospital for disposal.
2. If someone assists you with your chemotherapy at home, they need to wear disposable gloves (provided by hospital). After using these gloves, put them into the labelled plastic bag and wash your hands.

Handwashing Technique

Hands are washed: before and after handling chemotherapy and/or wastes, even if wearing gloves.

- wash hands with mild soap under warm running water
- wash for 2 minutes
- rinse and dry

Skin Care

Chemotherapy medicine spilled on the skin may cause irritation. If any does spill on your skin, wash the area with soap and water for 2 minutes, then dry. If irritation occurs, call your doctor.

Body Fluids (stool, urine, vomit)

You may use the toilet as usual. Wash your hands well with soap and water after using the toilet.

Laundry

Items soiled with body fluids (stool, urine, vomit) are handled with household rubber gloves and placed into the washer. They may be washed as usual. Before removing gloves, wash them with warm soap and water.