



Chemotherapy Safety

Certain precautions should be taken to protect you and your caregivers from coming into contact with chemotherapy medications. Chemotherapy leaves the body through urine, stool, vomit, and blood. Most chemotherapy medications are out of the body in less than 48 hours. Following these precautions will help you avoid all body fluids that may contain chemotherapy

- Hand washing is the most important way to prevent infection. Wash your hands before and after the following: preparing food, eating, going to the bathroom, touching body fluids (including blowing your nose), working with plants or soil, using gloves for a task. Antiseptic gel and lotion can be better at killing germs than soap. Do not use these products if your hands are visibly soiled or have body fluids on them
- Place a hazardous waste container in your home to place soiled gloves, dressings, and other items that contain body wastes, such as diapers. Store these containers out of the reach of children. Your local health department can provide local codes and ordinances regarding disposal of hazardous containers. Southern Cancer Center cannot accept your container for disposal.
- Use gloves to handle laundry that is soiled with chemotherapy. Wash any soiled linens or clothing right away with regular soap in your washer. If you do not have a washer, place the soiled linens in a bag until they can be washed.
- If you get chemotherapy or body wastes on your skin, wash the area with soap and water immediately, then dry. Call your physician if there is redness or irritation on the skin that doesn't resolve in an hour.
- It is acceptable for other members in your household to use the same toilet as long as the waste is flushed completely. If you use a bedside commode, bedpan, urinal, or basin for vomiting, wear gloves and rinse the container with water after each use. Clean it with soap and water at least once a day. If you use disposable diapers or pads, change it when it becomes soiled and wash the skin immediately with soap and water. If you have an ostomy, wear gloves when changing or emptying the device. All diapers, pads, and gloves soiled with chemotherapy wastes should be disposed of in a hazardous container.
- If body waste splashes into your eyes, flush them immediately with water for 10-15 minutes and call your doctor.

Sexual activity, Pregnancy, and Breast Feeding

You should not have sexual intercourse for 48 hours after receiving chemotherapy. It is important to use contraception to prevent pregnancy while on chemotherapy. Two forms of birth control are recommended to avoid pregnancy when you are on these medications and for at least 6 months following treatment discontinuation. It is important to discuss any plans for pregnancy after chemotherapy with your physician. Chemotherapy can be harmful and even fatal for a developing fetus. Notify your physician immediately if pregnancy occurs. Pregnant or breast feeding women should wear gloves and gowns when caring for patients receiving chemotherapy.