

# Handling Chemotherapy Safely

Chemotherapy medicines, also called chemo, may be present in stool, urine, blood, vomit, saliva, mucus, or drainage. Small amounts are also in semen and vaginal body fluids. To be safe, avoid contact with the chemo medicines and body waste and fluids. Follow these safety guidelines for 48 hours after each time you have chemo.

When you are given chemo, the staff may wear gloves, masks, gowns or goggles when handling chemotherapy, blood and body waste.

## Avoid Contact with Body Waste

Follow these safety guidelines anytime you may touch body fluids or waste. This includes urine, stool, vomit, blood or containers that touch these such as the toilet, bedpan or ostomy bags.

- Buy protective gloves at your local pharmacy.
- Wear the gloves when touching anything that has body fluids on or in it. Put gloves on before touching the toilet, bedpan, ostomy bag, diaper, bed sheets or pads. Wash your hands with the gloves on, then remove the gloves and wash your hands again.
- Empty body waste into the toilet. Empty it close to the water to limit splashing.
- Flush the toilet twice with the lid down.
- Men should sit down on the toilet.
- After each use, clean containers with soap and water. Be sure to rinse well.
- If using diapers, use disposable diapers.
- Clean the toilet bowl in the usual manner. Clean up any splashes with soap and water.
- Wear protective gloves to throw away soiled trash. Wash your hands with the gloves on. Then remove the gloves and wash your hands again.
- Trash that has been soiled with medicine or body fluids or waste should be put in a leak-proof plastic bag. Then, put this bag in a second plastic bag.

## Laundry

- Wear protective gloves to handle laundry soiled by body fluids.
- Place it in the washer without mixing with other non-soiled laundry.
- Use normal detergent and hot or warm water.
- Wash this laundry right away. If not possible, put it in a plastic bag and wash it as soon as you can.
- Wash your hands with the gloves on. Then remove the gloves and wash your hands again.

## Spills

If body fluids splash or spill:

- Put on protective gloves.
- Soak up the spill with paper towels.
- Clean spill area with soap and water using paper towels. Rinse the area well with water.
- Throw away paper towels in a plastic bag. Then place that bag into another plastic bag.
- Wash your hands with the gloves on. Then remove the gloves and wash your hands again.

## **Skin and Eye Contact**

If body fluids touch your skin or eyes:

- Wash your skin with soap and water for 5 minutes. Call your doctor if the skin stays red or irritated for more than one hour.
- Flush your eyes with water for 5 minutes. **Then call your doctor right away.**

## **Pregnant Women**

- Pregnant women helping patients should avoid coming in contact with the patients' urine, stool, vomit, or semen during treatment and for the first 3 or 7 days after each chemotherapy treatment.

## **Sexual Intercourse**

- The use of condoms is recommended for 3 or 7 days after therapy to protect your partner from exposure to chemotherapy drugs in your body fluids.

## **Medicine Taken by Mouth**

- Wash your hands after handling your pills. Caretakers should wear protective gloves while touching the pills, not with bare hands. If you are taking the medication for more than one day, take it around the same time each day. If you do not take all of your pills, return them to the doctor's office on your next visit.

## **Ostomy Care**

- Caretakers should wear protective gloves when emptying or changing the appliance. For sanitary reasons, soiled supplies are discarded by "double bagging". Place the waste first into a plastic tied bag or zip-lock bag, and then put this bag into another plastic bag and throw it away in the trash.

**Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**