

Chemotherapy or cytotoxic medicine



What is Chemotherapy or Cytotoxic medicine?

- Chemotherapy is the use of medicines or drugs to treat disease. Chemotherapy and cytotoxic medicines are given to destroy diseased cells or keep them from growing. They may also harm normal cells. You must take special care to not to have accidental contact with chemotherapy.
- Chemotherapy medicines are passed through vomit, urine, and stool. It can take a long time to get all the chemotherapy out of the body. It may be hours or days for this to happen. Body fluids that have chemotherapy medicines in them may contain hazardous materials. These fluids must be handled with special care while chemotherapy is being given and for a full 48 hours after receiving chemotherapy.

What special care is needed?

Follow these directions **during chemotherapy and for 48 hours after:**

- Wear gloves if you are going to touch any body fluids. This includes stool, urine, or vomit. If you are not in the hospital, you may buy disposable gloves at a local drug store. After removing your gloves, **wash your hands well with soap and water.**
- Close the toilet lid and flush twice in a row every time your child uses it. Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet. Wash any area of the body that comes in contact with stool, urine, or vomit.
- Put used disposable diapers in a plastic bag and then into another plastic bag. Put the bagged diaper in a covered garbage can.
- Wash any contaminated linens or clothes **alone** in the wash machine using hot water.
- Cover mattresses and pillows with plastic covers.
- Return any unused oral medicine to the clinic. Do not dispose of unused medicine in the toilet or sink.
- Pregnant caregivers should not handle or mix tablet or liquid chemotherapy.
- Make a spill kit that has the following:
 - 2 pairs of disposable gloves.
 - Paper towels or an absorbent towel that can be thrown away.
 - Dish soap or laundry detergent.
 - 2 plastic bags that seal (1 gallon size or larger).

Can family members have contact with my child during this time?

Yes. It is very important for your child to have contact with your family. Eating and playing together, hugging and kissing are all safe. This is a very important part of your child's recovery. If a family member has signs of cold or flu symptoms, they should minimize contact with your child.

How should these medicines be stored at home?

- Keep medicine in a safe place. It must be out of the reach of children and pets.
- **Do not** store medicines in a bathroom. The high moisture may damage or destroy the medicine.
- Make sure all of the medicines are labeled. Always check the label. See if it needs to be stored in the refrigerator or away from light.

The label should have:

- Your child's name.
- The name of the medicine.
- The dose.
- How it should be given.

Is it safe to put chemotherapy or cytotoxic agents in the trash?

No. These are hazardous waste. They need to be kept separate.

- IV supplies or needles: Ask your home care agency how to dispose.
- Oral medicines: Normally, there should not be left over. If there is, bring the extra medicine to your next clinic appointment.

What happens in the hospital?

When your child is in the hospital, your nurse and caregivers will need to take safety measures. They will wear:

- A gown, gloves and possibly eye protection if there is a risk of splashing chemotherapy. This includes while chemotherapy is given or when it is removed.
- A gown and gloves any time vomit, urine, or stool is handled. This includes during and for 48 hours after chemotherapy or cytotoxic agent was given.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.