



Keeping Your Home Safe After a Chemotherapy Treatment

Chemotherapy medication is very strong medication. It can get into all parts of the body, including the blood, urine, stool, vomit, and other body fluids. For this reason, you need to take extra care to keep your home safe for your family and friends.

- Always store chemotherapy medication and supplies securely, out of the reach of children and pets.
- Pregnant women, children and pets should not touch chemotherapy medication or your body fluids for 48 hours after a chemotherapy treatment.

You and your family members and friends should follow these directions for 48 hours after each chemotherapy treatment. If you or a caregiver has questions about this information, contact a member of your chemotherapy care team.

Precautions for you in the bathroom

1. Make sure the toilet seat is clean and dry before and after you use it. Use soap and water to clean it as needed; rinse it well before drying it.
2. Both women and men who have chemotherapy should sit on the toilet when urinating. This reduces splashing.
3. After using the toilet, close the lid and then flush the toilet two times.
4. Wash your hands well with soap and water after you go to the bathroom.

Precautions for anyone who does laundry

Clothing or linen that has only typical soil on it — for example, coffee and food stains or dirt on the collar and cuffs — should be handled and washed like any other laundry.

Blood, urine, stool, vomit, and other body fluids are not considered typical soil.

Clothing or linen that has blood, urine, stool, vomit, and other body fluids on it needs special handling and washing.

- Anyone who touches or handles these clothes and linens should wear disposable gloves.
- These clothes and linens should be washed separately from other laundry. You may use the same washing machine and your usual soap.
- Wash these clothes and linens two times in hot water. If the washer has a second rinse cycle, you may want to use that as well.
- If you do not have access to a washing machine when you need to launder these items, put them into a plastic bag as soon as they are soiled. Keep the bag closed tightly and away from people and pets until the items can be washed.

Precautions for anyone who empties a urinal, bedpan, commode or other container

Anyone who empties a urinal, bedpan, a commode, or a container used for vomit should follow these guidelines.

1. Wear disposable gloves.
2. Lift up the seat of the toilet.
3. Hold the container close to the water as you empty it. This helps avoid a lot of splashing.
4. Close the toilet lid and then flush the toilet two times.
5. Clean the toilet area with soap and water. Rinse well. Empty the cleaning water into the toilet.
6. Wash the urinal, bedpan, commode or container carefully with detergent and water after each use. Be sure to wear gloves.

Special precautions for caregivers

- Wash your hands well with soap and water after you provide care of any kind. Rub your hands together as you rinse them well.
- Wear disposable gloves any time you are near or have contact with your loved one's blood, urine, stool, vomit, or other body fluids. Wash your hands well with soap and water after you take off the gloves.
- Wear disposable gloves any time you touch chemotherapy medication, including pills. Wash your hands well with soap and water after you take off the gloves.



Common questions

What do I do if my chemotherapy medication spills?

- If you were given a “spill kit,” follow the directions in the kit.
- If you were not given a spill kit, wear disposable gloves. Clean the area with soap and water and rinse it well. Wash your hands well with soap and water after you take off the gloves.
- If your medication is a pill, wear disposable gloves to pick up the pill. Clean any area the pill touches with soap and water. Rinse the area and dry it well. Wash your hands well with soap and water after you take off the gloves.

Is it safe for family members to have contact with me during treatment?

Yes. Eating together, enjoying favorite activities, hugging, and closed-mouth kissing are all safe. It is important to maintain your connection with loved ones, family and friends.

Is it safe for my family to use the same toilet I use?

Yes. Sharing the bathroom is safe as long as you clean any body fluids from the toilet.

What should I do if I do not have control of my bowel or bladder?

You or your caregiver should wear disposable gloves. Use a disposable, plastic-backed pad, diaper or sheet to soak or pick up the urine or stool. Take the soiled clothing or other items off of your body right away. (See laundry information.) Wash the involved area(s) well with soap and water; rinse and dry well. Apply a moisture barrier before you put on clean clothing. Wash your hands well with soap and water after you clean your body.

What precautions are needed to empty my ostomy?

If you have an ostomy, your caregiver should wear disposable gloves when he or she empties or changes the bag. Put used disposable supplies into a garbage bag. Then put that bag into another garbage bag. You may put this waste and used gloves into your home garbage. Follow your usual directions to care for the skin and to replace the bag. Anyone who handles ostomy supplies or cares for your body should wash their hands well with soap and water after all of these steps are finished.

Is it safe to be sexually active during my treatment?

Chemotherapy may be present in vaginal fluids and semen up to 48 hours after treatment. If you have sexual activity during this time:

- Use a condom, unless your health care provider tells you that using a condom is not needed.
- Afterward, be sure to wash all involved areas well with soap and water; rinse and dry well.

BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal Mayo Clinic patient of more than 40 years and a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching. Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

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