



## Handling Hazardous Drugs Safely at Home

Patient Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Hazardous Drug \_\_\_\_\_

*This information provides tips on handling hazardous drugs safely at home. By working safely with these substances, you can lessen the chance of exposing yourself and the environment to these chemicals.*

### Handling hazardous drugs

- Wash your hands before and after handling hazardous drugs.
- Wear disposable “safety plus” gloves (nitrile, not latex) when handling any type of hazardous drugs (injectable or by mouth). Do not use torn or punctured gloves.
- Place a plastic-backed, absorbent pad under the work area if changing pump cassettes, tubing, or when handling hazardous drugs.
- Check intravenous (I.V.) connections regularly to make sure that they are secure.
- Discard gloves in specially marked chemotherapy waste bags.

### Storing hazardous drugs

- Your nurse will tell you about special storage instructions.
- Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- If the drug needs refrigeration, do not place it in or near the freezer, and separate it from other foods (i.e., use a crisper bin or place the medication in a container).
- Do not crush or break pills. If you are unable to swallow them, contact your health care provider.

### Accidental hazardous drug spills

- Clean small hazardous drug spills (less than 1 teaspoon) immediately. Wear two pairs of “safety plus” gloves (nitrile, not latex), and blot the spill dry with a gauze pad. Clean the area three times with soap and water.
- For larger spills, follow the instructions on the spill kit. Clean the spill area three times, and dispose of the gauze pads in specially marked chemotherapy waste bags.

Immediately take off clothing soiled with hazardous drugs.

- When handling bed linens or clothing soiled by hazardous drugs, do not touch the soiled area with your bare hands. Wear “safety plus” gloves (nitrile, not latex) and a gown and immediately place the linens or clothing in the washing machine. Wash items separately from other laundry in hot water. If you are unable to wash these items immediately, place them in a sealed plastic bag until they can be washed.

## Skin care for accidental splashes

- Hazardous drugs spilled on your skin may cause irritation. Wash the area thoroughly with soap and water; then dry the area. Observe the skin for next 7 days. If redness or skin irritation occurs, contact your NIH doctor.
- If the drug splashes into your eye, flush the eye with tap water for at least 15 minutes. Then, contact your doctor.

## Disposing of body waste while you are taking hazardous drugs

- You may use the bathroom as usual. Wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet.
- Toilets should be double-flushed each time they are used for 48 hours after receiving chemotherapy.

- All caregivers must wear gloves when handling your blood, urine, stool, or emesis for 48 hours after you receive hazardous drugs.
- After using any devices for bodily waste, thoroughly wash your hands and the devices with soap and water.
- Diapers should be placed in “zip-lock” plastic bags for disposal, for 2 days after receiving hazardous drugs.

## Disposing of hazardous drug supplies

- Place all supplies used for giving or preparing hazardous drugs in specially marked chemotherapy waste bags.
- Seal the waste bags securely using rubber bands or “zip-lock” features. Return these bags to the hospital for proper disposal.



2/07

This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Where applicable, brand names of commercial products are provided only as illustrative examples of acceptable products, and do not imply endorsement by NIH; nor does the fact that a particular brand name product is not identified imply that such product is unsatisfactory.

National Institutes of Health  
Clinical Center  
Bethesda, MD 20892  
Questions about the Clinical Center?  
OCCC@cc.nih.gov