



Handling Chemotherapy Drugs Safely at Home

This information provides tips on handling chemotherapy 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 chemotherapy drugs

- Wash your hands before and after handling chemotherapy drugs.
- Wear disposable latex gloves when handling any type of chemotherapy drugs (in the vein or in the muscle). Be careful not to touch medications taken by mouth with your hands. Some medications taken by mouth might require you to wear gloves. If gloves must be worn, your nurse will let you know.
- Do not use torn or punctured gloves.
- After each use, discard gloves in specially marked chemotherapy waste bags.
- Place a plastic-backed, absorbent pad under the work area when changing pump cassettes, tubing, or when handling chemotherapy drugs.
- Check I.V. connections regularly to make sure that they are secure.

Storing chemotherapy drugs

- Keep these drugs out of the reach of children and pets.

- If the drugs need refrigeration, do not place them in or near the freezer, and separate them from other foods (i.e., use a crisper bin or place the medication in a container).
- Your nurse will tell you about special storage instructions.

Accidental chemotherapy drug spills

- Clean small chemotherapy drug spills (less than 1 teaspoon) immediately. Wear two pairs of latex gloves, and wipe the spill 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 chemotherapy drugs, do not touch the soiled area with your bare hands. Wear latex gloves and immediately place the linens or clothing in the washing machine. Wash these 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

- Chemotherapy 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 drugs splash into your eyes, flush them with tap water for at least 5 minutes. Then, contact your doctor.

Disposal 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.
- All caregivers must wear gloves when handling your blood, urine, stool, or emesis while you receive chemotherapy drugs. After using any devices for bodily waste, thoroughly wash your hands and the devices with soap and water.
- When they care for you, your care givers will wear gloves for 2 days after you receive chemotherapy.
- Diapers should be placed in “zip-lock” plastic bags for disposal. Do this for 2 days after receiving chemotherapy.

Disposing of chemotherapy drug supplies

- Place all supplies used for giving or preparing chemotherapy 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.



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