

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 avoid accidental contact with chemotherapy.
- Chemotherapy medicines are passed in vomit, urine, and stool. It can take hours, and sometimes days, after having chemotherapy to get it all out of the body. 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 having 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.**
- Flush the toilet 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.
- Pre-wash linens that have been contaminated **before** putting them in the regular wash.
- Cover mattresses and pillows with plastic covers.

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.

How should these medicines be stored at home?

- Keep medicine stored in a safe place. It needs to 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.

Storing medicine at home (continued)

- 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. It needs to be kept separate.

- Ask your home care agency how to dispose of used IV supplies or needles.
- Normally, there should not be left over oral medicines. If there is, give the extra medicine to your nurse or doctor at your next clinic visit.

What happens in the hospital?

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

- A gown, gloves and possibly eye protection if there is a risk of splashing chemotherapy. This includes during the time 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 concerns or if your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.