

Safety at Home When You Are On Systemic Therapy Treatment

This handout explains what you and anyone involved in your care need to do to stay safe while you are receiving systemic therapy treatment. Systemic therapy treatment includes chemotherapy and immunotherapy medications. It is important you and anyone who gives you care read this handout and the medication handouts you were given.

Systemic therapy treatment includes:

- Chemotherapy treatment
- Immunotherapy treatment (includes treatment with targeted therapy and t-cell engaging antibodies)

These two types of treatments are different in:

- How they work
- The side effects they cause
- The safety precautions you and anyone who gives you care needs to follow.

You may be prescribed one or both of these systemic therapy treatments. Your healthcare team will provide you with information about the treatment(s) you will receive.

Chemotherapy medications destroy the cancer cells in your body. These medications can also affect your normal cells. This is what causes side-effects you may have. Exposure to (or contact with) small amounts of these medications over a long time can damage the normal cells of anyone who gives you care.

Immunotherapy medications help your immune system destroy the cancer cells in your body. Immunotherapy medications do not cause damage to healthy cells the same way that chemotherapy medications do.

Read this section if you are receiving chemotherapy or immunotherapy treatment.

- After each of your chemotherapy or immunotherapy treatments it is safe for you to be around other adults, children, and pets.
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women and children should not touch any of your chemotherapy or immunotherapy medications, your body fluids, or laundry that has your body fluids on them.
- Use a condom or dental dam for all sexual activity. If there is any chance you or your partner may become pregnant, you need to use 2 effective forms of birth control while you are on chemotherapy or immunotherapy treatment. Ask your oncologist when it is safe for you or your partner to get pregnant after your treatment is finished.

☐ **Read this section if you are receiving immunotherapy medications.**

Anyone involved in your care needs to:

- Wash off any body fluids (urine, sweat, vomit, stool, semen, or vaginal fluids) that get on their skin with soap and water.
- Wear disposable gloves and use paper towels to clean up any of your body fluids (urine, sweat, vomit, stool, semen, or vaginal fluid) or to touch any items that have your body fluids on them. Use the regular garbage to dispose of the gloves and paper towels.

☐ **Read this section if you are receiving chemotherapy medications.**

Chemotherapy medications leave your body through your body fluids (urine, sweat, vomit, stool, semen or vaginal fluid). **It is important you follow the steps below for 7 days after** you were given your chemotherapy medications. These steps will protect you and any person who gives you care. If there are not 7 days between the days you were given your chemotherapy medications, you need to follow these steps every day.

You need to:

- Sit down to use the toilet. Close the lid and flush the toilet twice after you use it.
- Keep a plastic container nearby to use for vomiting if you are unable to get to the bathroom.

You or anyone involved in your care needs to:

- Wash off any body fluids (urine, sweat, vomit, stool, semen, or vaginal fluids) that get on your or their skin with soap and water.
- Wash anything that is in contact with your body fluids (urine, sweat, vomit, stool, semen, or vaginal fluid) right away. Wash the item(s) 2 separate times in soap and hot water in a washing machine when possible. Do not wash with other laundry.
- Wear disposable gloves to wash any non-disposable equipment (for example: bedpans, urinals, commodes, or vomit basins) with soap and hot water after you use them.
- Rinse eyes with water if any of your body fluid splashes into them. Rinse eyes 2 to 3 times to make sure your body fluid has been removed from them.

If you have a problem or concern about a symptom or side effect from your cancer treatment:

1. Call your primary nurse at the cancer centre from Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4 pm, (except on holidays). Use the phone number your primary nurse gave you.
2. Contact CareChart Digital Health from Monday to Friday, 4 pm to 8:30 am and anytime on weekends and holidays for symptom management support.

Talk to a nurse using one of these options:

- Call the after-hours telephone line at 1-877-681-3057.
- Request a video call by going to carechart.ca.
- Use the CareChart Digital Health App. This App is available to download for iOS or Android devices.

Call 911 or go to the Emergency Department at the hospital closest to you for a medical emergency. Talk to a member of your healthcare team if you have questions or do not understand any of the information in this handout.

This handout was created by the Patient Education Program at the Durham Regional Cancer Centre/Lakeridge Health. It was last reviewed in May 2026