



# Chemotherapy Safety at Home

‘When I go home after chemotherapy’

Information for patients





## **WHEN I GO HOME AFTER CHEMOTHERAPY**

There are precautions that you need to take if you go home after having chemotherapy or if you go home with an infusion pump. This is because some of the by-products of chemotherapy come out of your body in your urine and faeces for a short time after your treatment.

The following is a list of precautions you need to take.

### **Precautions - general**

1. Flush twice after each visit to the toilet for a period up to 2 days after treatment.
2. Wear rubber gloves to clean up any spills of urine, faeces, vomit or chemotherapy from your pump.
3. Wear rubber gloves to handle bed linen, disposable cleaning cloths or clothing that is contaminated by urine, faeces, vomit or chemotherapy from your pump.
4. Wash bed linen, cleaning cloths or clothing in your washing machine on a long cycle. You don't need any special type of washing detergent.
5. Place the rubber gloves in a plastic bag.  
Tie up the bag and put into the rubbish bin.
6. Wash your hands well with soap and warm water.
7. If you accidentally get chemotherapy from your infusion pump on your skin, rinse and wash well with soapy water and contact your chemotherapy nurse at the hospital ward/clinic.
8. Keep all chemotherapy in a safe place according to the storage instructions on the product label (refrigerator or at room temperature).
9. Ensure that all medicines, administration equipment and sharps bins are out of the reach of children or pets.
10. If you are the carer, and are pregnant, think you may be pregnant or are breast feeding, it is preferable that you do not handle chemotherapy drugs, or waste, unless absolutely necessary.

## **ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS THOROUGHLY AFTER HANDLING CHEMOTHERAPY DRUGS OR WASTE.**

- ❖ Any liquid spillages of chemotherapy drugs onto the floor or work surfaces should be dealt with immediately to minimise potential harm to yourself or other people.
- ❖ Use paper towels to place a ring around the spillage so that it cannot spread to a larger area.
- ❖ Put on apron and gloves provided.
- ❖ Cover the liquid with a paper towel until the fluid has been 'soaked' up through the towel and the towel is moist so that when the towel is picked up the fluid will not drip out of the towel. Repeat until all the liquid has been mopped up.
- ❖ Pick up moist towels and place them in one of the orange bags provided. Remove gloves and apron and place in orange bag and seal it. Put sealed orange bag into second orange bag and seal it.
- ❖ The floor or work surface should then be given a routine clean with warm soapy water as soon as possible.
- ❖ Remember to inform your chemotherapy nurse at the hospital ward/ clinic as soon as you can that you have had a spillage, so that replacement medication can be arranged if necessary.
- ❖ Return the sealed chemotherapy waste bag to the hospital ward or clinic on your next visit.

**Please read the drug information leaflet for your chemotherapy.  
If you are unsure of anything, ask your chemotherapy nurse.**

## **HOW SHOULD I DEAL WITH A CHEMOTHERAPY SPILLAGE IN THE EYES?**

- ❖ Immediately flush the affected eye and the surrounding areas with large volumes of cool tap water. This should be done for at least ten minutes.
- ❖ Go to your nearest Accident & Emergency Department as it is important that you seek medical attention for any spillages into the eye.

## **HOW SHOULD I DEAL WITH A CHEMOTHERAPY SPILLAGE ONTO CLOTHING/BED LINEN?**

- ❖ Wearing a pair of gloves, blot dry with a paper towel and remove the contaminated clothing immediately.
- ❖ The clothes/linen should be washed separately from other clothing as soon as possible.
- ❖ If the drug has soaked through the clothes to the skin, this should be dealt with as outlined above.

If you are in any doubt, please contact your chemotherapy nurse at the hospital ward/clinic where you are receiving treatment.

## **FOR PATIENTS RECEIVING CONTINUOUS INTRAVENOUS INFUSIONS**

### **What should I do if there is a large volume chemotherapy spill on work surfaces, or floors?**

You may have been provided with a chemotherapy spillage kit for use in the home in the event of a spillage. The kits are usually only provided if there is a risk of a large volume of chemotherapy drug being spilt (for example with infusion devices).

# WHAT ABOUT CHEMOTHERAPY TABLETS AT HOME?

When you have cancer treatment you may be given many different tablets - some for side - effects and some may be chemotherapy tablets or capsules. The chemotherapy tablets or capsules have some special precautions.

The following is a list of precautions you need to take.

## Precautions - tablets and capsules

1. Keep out of reach of children.
2. If someone else is giving you the chemotherapy tablets or capsules they should not touch them. They could tip them into a medicine cup or wear disposable gloves.
3. Chemotherapy tablets/capsules should always be swallowed whole, never crushed or chewed. If this is not possible Contact your chemotherapy nurse at the hospital ward/clinic.
4. If you vomit after taking your chemotherapy tablet/capsule, do not take another dose. Contact your chemotherapy nurse at the hospital ward/clinic.
5. Make sure you know how many chemotherapy tablet/capsules to take for the course of treatment.
6. Return any unused tablets/capsules to your chemotherapy nurse at the hospital ward/clinic for proper disposal.

**Do not flush tablets or capsules  
down toilet or throw into the rubbish bin**

7. If you take too many tablets by mistake contact your chemotherapy nurse for advice.
8. It is recommended that anyone who is pregnant or breastfeeding does not handle any chemotherapy medications, waste products or soiled linen.
9. If unsure about how to take tablets contact your chemotherapy nurse for advice.

## **DISPOSAL OF CHEMOTHERAPY WASTE**

### **How should I dispose of empty medicine containers/bottles or packets?**

- ❖ Empty chemotherapy medicine bottles, cartons, tubes or ointment jars can be thrown away in household waste. Put lids/caps on the containers before discarding.
- ❖ Medicine spoons, syringes and cups used to give oral chemotherapy should be washed and discarded in household waste after the course of treatment has been completed.

### **How should I dispose of intravenous infusion devices/bags and or syringes?**

- ❖ Empty infusion devices, bags or syringes that are used for the administration of chemotherapy drugs should be disposed of in a 'chemotherapy waste container'. These containers are provided from the hospital.
- ❖ Once the container is 'three quarters' full, it should be sealed and returned to the hospital ward/clinic on your next visit.
- ❖ If not scheduled for a return treatment please return the chemotherapy waste container to your chemotherapy nurse at the hospital ward/clinic.

### **What should I do with unused chemotherapy medicines?**

- ❖ All unused chemotherapy medication (tablets, capsules, oral liquids, ointments, infusions, and syringes for intravenous administration) should be returned to the chemotherapy nurse at the hospital ward/clinic.

Do not flush tablets down the toilet or throw away in household waste.

## How should body fluids be disposed of?

- ❖ Urine, stools and vomit can contain chemotherapy drugs, or their breakdown products, for as long as seven days after a patient has received treatment. Therefore, it is important that patients/carers wear gloves when handling urine, stools, vomit, contaminated bed linen and nappies for seven days following treatment. You should either use the gloves provided by the hospital, or a pair of rubber household gloves kept especially for this purpose.
- ❖ Flush twice after each visit to the toilet for a period up to 2 days after treatment.
- ❖ Gloves should be changed immediately if torn or contaminated.
- ❖ The contents of vomit bowls/bedpan/urinals should be flushed down the toilet. Any disposable containers should then be double bagged and disposed of in the household waste.  
Non-disposable containers should be washed thoroughly in warm soapy water.
- ❖ Disposable wipes and gloves should be double bagged and disposed of in the household waste.
- ❖ Contaminated bed linen and clothes should be washed separately to other items (as outlined in the spillage section).



# MANAGEMENT OF CHEMOTHERAPY WASTE

## General Information

- ❖ Any liquid spillages of chemotherapy drugs onto the floor, or on your clothes or skin should be dealt with immediately to minimise potential harm to yourself or other people.
- ❖ You must wear gloves when dealing with a chemotherapy spillage. Make sure that they are not damaged, torn or split. Keep a separate pair of gloves for dealing with a spillage and an extra pair in case the other ones gets damaged. If you have been provided with a spillage kit, use the contents of the kit for a large spillage.
- ❖ Remember to inform your chemotherapy nurse at the hospital ward/clinic as soon as possible that you have had a spillage so that replacement medication can be arranged if necessary.

## How should I deal with a chemotherapy spillage onto the skin?

- ❖ Wash the area with plenty of tap water. This should then be repeated using warm soapy water, and the area gently dried.
- ❖ Do not apply any moisturising cream or hand cream on the affected area.
- ❖ If redness or irritation lasts for longer than a few hours, contact your chemotherapy nurse at the hospital ward/clinic.





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Day Unit Mon - Fri 8.00am - 5.00pm  
01355 584540

## UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL MONKLANDS

Ward 15 Day Unit,  
Mon - Fri 8.00am - 5.00pm  
01698 753432

## UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL WISHAW

Medical Day Unit  
Mon - Fri 8.00am - 5.00pm  
01698 366310

## Outwith hours and at weekends

Cancer Treatment Helpline - 24hrs  
0800 9177711



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