PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Safe Handling of Chemotherapy and Biotherapy at Home

This information will help you safely handle chemotherapy and biotherapy at home.

Touching Your Chemotherapy and Biotherapy Medication

- Wash your hands before and after touching your medication.
- If your caregiver is helping you, they will need to wear disposable gloves. They should throw the gloves away after using them and wash their hands.
- Don’t let pregnant or nursing women touch your medication.
- Don’t crush, break, or open any pills or capsules unless your doctor tells you to.
- If a child or pet accidentally swallows your medication, call Poison Control right away at 800-222-1222.

Storing and Disposing of Your Chemotherapy and Biotherapy Medication
• Store your medications in sealed containers away from children and pets.

• Keep your chemotherapy and biotherapy medication in its original container. Don’t store them in daily pill boxes.

• Keep your medication in a cool, dry place away from heat, sunlight, or moisture.

• Don’t let chemotherapy or biotherapy medications come in contact with your other medications. They should always be separate.

• Your nurse or pharmacist may give you special instructions on how to store your medication. Follow their instructions.

• If your medication needs to be in the refrigerator, store the medication container inside another container or in a sealed bag. Make sure it doesn’t touch any food.

• If you have any leftover medication, keep it in its container and place in a plastic bag before returning it to your doctor’s office or chemotherapy unit. Don’t put it in the trash.

• Don’t recycle or reuse empty pill bottles or containers for your cancer medication. You can throw empty pill bottles in the trash.

• For information about storing and disposing of sharps, follow the instructions in the resource How to Store and Dispose of Your Home Medical Sharps (www.mskcc.org/pe/storeDispose_sharps).

Cleaning Intravenous (IV) Medication Leaks
and Spills

Check the connections of your IV tubing twice a day. Make sure they’re tight and not leaking. If your medication leaks or spills, follow the guidelines in this section. For a quick reference, read our resource *Follow the 4 Cs if Your Chemo Leaks or Spills* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/4_csLeaks_spills](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/4_csLeaks_spills)).

You should be ready to clean up medication leaks or spills while you’re getting continuous IV chemotherapy at home. Make a spill kit that has the supplies below. Keep the kit where you can easily reach it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplies for Cleaning Up Your Spill</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 pairs of disposable gloves</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper towels or an absorbent towel that can be thrown away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dish soap or laundry detergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 plastic bags that seal (1 gallon size or larger)</td>
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</table>

**What to do if your IV connection is leaking**

**If your IV connection is leaking, follow these steps:**

1. Put on 2 disposable gloves.
2. Cover the connection with a paper towel and wrap a plastic bag around the connection.
3. Clamp the tubing.
4. If you have a pump, turn it off.
5. Call right away for more instructions.
If your liquid chemotherapy or biotherapy medication spills:

1. Put on 2 pairs of disposable gloves.
2. Clamp the tubing.
3. If you have a pump, turn it off.
4. Place the following in plastic bags and seal the bags tightly:
   - Any remaining medication
   - Any container, pump, or tubing (such as your Dosifuser® or CADD pump) used to deliver the medication
   - Your carrying case for your equipment, if you have one.
5. Soak up the spill with paper towels.
6. Clean the area with dish soap or laundry detergent and water. Rinse with clean water.
7. Place all supplies used to clean the spill in a plastic bag. Seal the bag. Make sure people and pets don’t come into contact with these supplies.
8. Remove the gloves. Wash your hands with soap and water.
9. Call your doctor’s office for instructions on how to dispose of the medication, equipment, and dirty cleaning supplies.

What to do if your medication gets in your eyes or on your skin

If your medication gets on your skin, wash the area with soap and water. Call your doctor or nurse if you have any redness, pain, or burning on your skin.
If your medication splashes in your eyes, rinse them with running water right away. Keep the water flowing over your open eyes for 10 to 15 minutes. Call your doctor or nurse to ask for more instructions.

**What to do if your medication gets on your clothing or linens**

1. Put on a pair of disposable gloves.
2. Make sure that the items with medication on them don’t touch any part of your body.
3. Wash the clothing and linens in hot water. **Don’t wash them with any other items.**
4. If possible, wash the dirty clothes and linens right away. If you can’t wash them right away, put them in a plastic bag until they can be washed.

**Handling Body Fluids**

Your medication may appear in your body fluids (such as your urine, bowel movements, vomit, vaginal fluid, or semen) during and after your therapy.

If you’re taking IV medication, follow the instructions below during your treatment and for 2 days after your treatment.

If you’re taking oral (by mouth) medication, follow the instructions below during your treatment and for 7 days after your treatment.
You and your caregiver should wear disposable gloves when:

- Emptying or rinsing containers such as a bedpan, urinal, or commode.
- Touching dirty diapers.
- Cleaning up urine, vomit, or bowel movements.

Wash your hands with soap and water after removing your disposable gloves.

Place all diapers in a sealed bag before putting them in the trash.

Close the toilet lid and flush twice after using the toilet.

Wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet.

Wash any area of your skin that comes into contact with urine, bowel movements, vomit, or other body fluids.

Keep small children and pets from playing in or drinking from the toilet.
If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.