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Chemotherapy Safety

Chemotherapy drugs are considered to be hazardous to people who handle them or come into contact with them. For patients, this means the drugs are strong enough to damage or kill cancer cells. But this also means the drugs can be a concern for others who might be exposed to them. This is why there are safety rules and recommendations for people who handle chemo drugs.

- [Precautions the cancer care team will take](#)
- [Special precautions when taking chemo by mouth](#)
- [Keeping family and friends safe](#)
- [Preventing infections](#)

It's important to know that not all medicines and drugs to treat cancer work the same way or have the same safety precautions. **The information below describes some safety concerns of traditional or standard chemotherapy. There are also other drugs that are used to treat cancer in different ways, including [targeted therapy](#)¹, hormone therapy, and [immunotherapy](#)².**

Precautions the cancer care team will take

You may notice special clothing and protective equipment being worn by the nurses and other members of your cancer care team. Pharmacists and nurses who prepare chemo drugs use a special type of pharmacy that must meet certain regulations. And nurses and others who give your chemo and help take care of you afterwards wear protective clothing, such as 2 pairs of special gloves and a gown, and sometimes goggles or a face shield.

as fluids from semen and the vagina. When chemo drugs or their waste are outside your body, they can harm or irritate skin. Other people and pets could be exposed to the drug waste for a few days if they come into contact with any of your body fluids.

Here are things you can do to help keep your family, visitors, and pets safe during this time:

- If possible, have children use a different toilet than the one you use.
- Flush the toilet twice after you use it. Put the lid down before flushing to avoid splashing. If possible, you may want to use a separate toilet during this time. If this is not possible, wear gloves to clean the toilet seat after each use.
- Sit on the toilet when you use it to cut down on splashing.
- Keep the toilet lid down when you're not using it to keep pets from drinking the water.
- Always wash your hands with warm water and soap after using the toilet. Dry your hands with paper towels and throw them away.
- If you vomit into the toilet, clean off all splashes and flush twice. If you vomit into a bucket or basin, carefully empty it into the toilet without splashing the contents and flush twice. Wash out the bucket with hot, soapy water and rinse it; empty the wash and rinse water into the toilet, then flush. Dry the bucket with paper towels and throw them away.

Caregivers should wear 2 pairs of throw-away gloves if they need to touch any of your body fluids. (These can be bought in most drug stores.) They should always

Most chemo drugs make you less able to fight infection, but there are ways you can do your best to avoid getting an infection. To learn more, see [Infections](#)⁴.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/targeted-therapy.html
2. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/immunotherapy.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/chemotherapy/oral-chemotherapy.html
www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/infections.html

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