



New England
Life Care

Home Infusion Therapy Services

Important Information for Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

Your doctor has prescribed home chemotherapy to treat or control your cancer. The purpose of chemotherapy is to kill or stop cancer cells from growing, however, during the process; it may also damage some normal cells. Special precautions must be taken to prevent chemotherapy from coming into accidental contact with you and others.

This information will help you and your family / significant others know how to avoid unnecessary exposure to chemotherapy, how to handle hazardous waste in your home and how to identify and manage potential problems associated with your course of chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy is Hazardous Waste

Chemotherapy medicine, pumps or any other items that come in contact with the medicine (i.e., syringes, needles, etc) at any time are considered contaminated with hazardous waste. Regardless of the method of administration, chemotherapy stays in your body for many hours, sometimes days, after your treatment is completed. It is eliminated in urine and stool. If you are vomiting, the vomit may also contain traces of chemotherapy.

Disposing of Hazardous Waste

Chemotherapy is considered hazardous waste. Materials contaminated with chemotherapy must be disposed of in specially marked containers. You have been given a hard plastic container labeled "CHEMOTHERAPY" or "BIO-HAZARDOUS WASTE". Equipment and gloves that have been in contact with chemotherapy should be placed in this container. If materials that have been in contact with chemotherapy are too large to fit in the container, the special plastic bag(s) included in your Chemotherapy Spill Kit should be used. Sharp objects should always be placed in the hard plastic container. When containers are $\frac{3}{4}$ full, you should contact NELC to pick up the container(s).

Handling Body Wastes

You may use the toilet (septic tank/city sewer) as usual, just flush it twice after each use during the time you are receiving chemotherapy and for 2 days after the completion of each course. Wash your hands with soap and water after each use and wash any skin directly exposed to urine, stool or vomit in the same manner. Pregnant women should avoid any direct contact with chemotherapy or contaminated wastes.

Sexual Intercourse

Because the chemotherapy you are receiving is considered contaminated with hazardous waste, this means that all body fluids are potentially contaminated as well. If you choose to have sexual intercourse during your course of chemotherapy, it is important that you use a condom to limit the risk of contamination to your partner.

Handling Contaminated Laundry

Items soiled with chemotherapy should be handled carefully to avoid getting the drug on your skin. Wear gloves when handling any items soiled with chemotherapy. Wash contaminated items separately from other laundry in the usual manner. If you do not have a washer, place the contaminated items in a plastic bag (by themselves) until they can be washed. If the contaminated item requires hand washing, use rubber gloves to wash.

Skin Care

Chemotherapy spilled on the skin may cause irritation. If this happens, thoroughly wash the area with soap and water, then dry. If redness persists for more than one hour, call your doctor. Because chemotherapy is absorbed through the skin, gloves should be worn when working with the chemotherapy, equipment or wastes.

Eye Care

If any chemotherapy splashes into your eyes, flush them out immediately with water for 10-15 minutes and notify your doctor.

It is important that you notify your nurse or doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Fever higher than 100° F. (may occur up to 14 days after your therapy is completed).
 - Shaking Chill (may occur up to 14 days after your therapy is completed).
 - Allergic reaction symptoms such as rash, itching, swelling or difficulty breathing.
 - Nausea or vomiting or both persisting for longer than 24 hours.
 - Unusual bleeding or bruising (for example, blood in urine or stool, nose bleeds) (may occur up to 14 days after your therapy is completed).
 - Mouth sores, mouth pain or trouble swallowing (this may occur up to 14 days after your therapy is completed).
 - Extreme fatigue.
 - Shortness of breath.
 - Constipation or diarrhea lasting longer than 48 hours or constipation or diarrhea not relieved by over the counter medications.
 - Any pain, redness or swelling at the site of the IV Catheter/ port.
 - Other medication specific symptoms: _____
-

The previous list includes some of the more common symptoms that you may experience both while receiving Chemotherapy as well after your therapy has been completed. If you experience any symptoms that are not included above, please don't hesitate to call your nurse or doctor.

Your Chemotherapy will proceed more smoothly if you do the following:

- Eat nourishing foods several times daily.
- Drink plenty of fluids several times daily (at least 8-8oz glasses).
- **Be sure to check with your doctor before taking aspirin or medications containing aspirin**; you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) as instructed by your doctor.
- Inform your doctor and nurse about all of the prescription medications you are taking as well as all over the counter medications, recreational drugs & home remedies.
- Follow the mouth care instructions provided by your doctor or nurse.
- Check with your doctor before having any dental work done.
- Check with your doctor before using any alcoholic beverages during your Chemotherapy course.
- If sexually active, discuss required precautions with your nurse or physician.

If you encounter any problems in following these instructions or if a situation arises which does not appear to be covered here, please call your nurse at the following number:

or Dr. _____ at _____