

Safety at Home When You Are On Systemic Therapy Treatment

Systemic therapy medications destroy the cancer cells in your body. These medications can also affect your normal cells. This is what may cause side-effects you 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. This handout gives you information on what you or anyone who gives you care needs to do to be safe.

Systemic therapy 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 systemic therapy medications. These steps will protect you and anyone who gives you care. If there are not 7 days between the days you were given your systemic therapy medications, you need to follow these steps every day.

You need to:

- Wash off any body fluids (urine, sweat, vomit, stool, semen or vaginal fluid) that get on your skin with soap and water.
- Sit down to use the toilet. Close the lid and flush the toilet twice after you use it.
- Keep a plastic container close to you. You can use it to vomit in if you cannot get to the bathroom.
- Wash anything that comes 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.
- Rinse your eyes with water if any of your body fluid splashes into them. Rinse your eyes 2 to 3 times to make sure your body fluid has been removed from 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 systemic therapy treatment. Talk to your healthcare team about this.

Anyone who gives you care needs to:

- Wash their skin with soap and water if any of your body fluids (urine, sweat, vomit, stool, semen or vaginal fluid) gets on them.
- 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 body fluids on them. Put the gloves and

- paper towels in a sealed plastic bag. Put this bag in the garbage.
- Wear disposable gloves to wash any non-disposable equipment (for example: bedpans, urinals, commodes, or vomit basins) with soap and hot water after you have used them.
 - Wash anything that comes in contact with your body fluids (urine, sweat, vomit, stool, semen or vaginal fluid) as soon as possible. Wash the item(s) 2 separate times in soap and hot water in a washing machine when possible. Do not wash with other laundry.
 - Rinse their eyes with water 2 to 3 times if any of your body fluid splashes into them.

Pregnant or breastfeeding women and children should not touch any of your systemic therapy medications, your body fluids or laundry that has your body fluids on them.

After each of your systemic therapy treatments it is safe for you to be around other adults, children, and pets.

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, 5 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 April of 2024.