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Safety at Home

Most systemic treatments (page 5) are very strong medications, so there are some special things you or your caregiver need to do to keep you and the people (and pets) around you safe.

Why do I need to be careful at home?

Systemic treatments leave your body through fluids and wastes like urine, stool or vomit. When people or pets come in contact with affected waste or fluids, it can be harmful and they could also get side effects.

Generally, it can take up to 7 days for systemic treatments to leave your body. It's important to **follow these safety precautions while you are taking your treatment and for 7 days after you finish your treatment.** Your nurse will let you know if you need to do this longer than 7 days.

Is it safe to have contact with others when I am taking these treatments?

Yes. Being with your loved ones is important. Eating together, enjoying favourite activities, hugging and kissing are all safe.

Is it safe to be sexually active?

Most often, yes. There may be some systemic treatment in vaginal fluid and semen up to 7 days after treatment, so use a condom. You and your partner should also avoid getting pregnant during treatment. Your health care team may give you more information.

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If you are worried about whether or not you can have children after treatment.

Handling Body Fluids and Waste at Home

How do I handle my body fluids or wastes?

Using the toilet:

- It is safe to use the same toilet (septic or city sewage) as other people
- Men should sit when using the toilet to avoid urine from splashing
- Flush the toilet 2 times (with the lid down) after you use it
- Wash any skin that touched urine or stool
- Wash your hands well with soap and water
- Use your own hand towel or paper towel if possible
- Clean any waste on the toilet with soap and water including the lid and handle

If you do not have control of your bladder or bowels:

- Use a plastic-backed pad, diaper or sheet that's disposable to absorb urine or stool
- Change the diaper or pad as soon as it gets soiled
- Wash any skin that comes in contact with the urine or stool with soap and water
- Wear disposable gloves when you handle the waste

If you have an ostomy:

- You or your caregiver should wear disposable gloves when you empty or change the bags
- Wash your hands with soap and water after you remove your gloves

If you vomit (throw up):

Try to vomit in the toilet if possible for easier clean up. Flush the toilet 2 times (with the lid down) after you use it.

If you use a bucket to vomit in:

- Wear gloves when you empty the bucket
- Wash the bucket with soap and water after each use
- Wash your hands with soap and water after you remove your gloves

If you use a bedpan, urinal or commode:

- Wear gloves when you empty it
- Wash it with soap and water after each use
- Wash your hands with soap and water after you remove your gloves



Disposable nitrile gloves offer the best protection when you're handling body fluids and waste. You can buy them at your local pharmacy.

What if my body wastes spill?

- Always wear disposable gloves
- Use paper towels, toilet paper or disposable absorbent pads to soak up as much of the spill as possible
- Wash the area well with soap and water 3 times.
- Put all of the materials in a bag and doublebag. Tie tightly.

What do I do with soiled laundry?

- Wear disposable gloves when handling the soiled laundry
- Wash them separately from other clothes and linens
- Wash through 2 complete washing machine cycles before you wear or use them again

What do I do with the garbage?

- Anything that may have come in contact with your body fluids or cancer treatment must be handled with care. Wear gloves when you handle anything soiled.
- Put things you cannot flush down the toilet in a garbage bag, and tie it tightly. Put this bag in a second garbage bag and tie it tightly.
- Wash your hands, with soap and water, after you remove and throw away the gloves.
- Once the garbage is double-bagged, you can throw it out with your regular garbage.
- Keep garbage out of reach of children and pets and throw it out with your regular garbage.

Handling Cancer Medications at Home

You may need to take some of your treatment at home — this could be in the form of an injection, pills, or maybe liquids. Whatever the form, you need to make sure you know how to handle them safely, and what to do if some of it spills.



Oral systemic treatments (taken by mouth, pill form)

You may get systemic treatments that you'll need to take by mouth (oral). It's important that you and your caregiver handle these medications safely.

- Pour the oral medication into a medication cup or the lid of the pill bottle to pour into the patient's mouth. Wash the cup with soap and water
- If you do not have a medication cup, wear disposable gloves
- Always wash your hands with soap and water after you are done

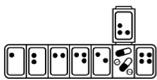


If you are pregnant or breast feeding, do not handle systemic treatment medications.

Here are some tips on safety:



- Do not chew, cut, crush or dissolve your medication unless you have spoken to the cancer centre pharmacist first.
- If the pills or capsules are damaged, do not breathe in the particles. If you accidentally get some in your eyes or nose, see page 20 for what to do.



- If you like to use pill boxes to help you remember when to take your medications, you will need to use one just for your cancer medications. If you notice the pill box or pill vial has powder inside it from the cancer medications breaking, call your cancer centre pharmacist on how to handle it.



- Do not throw the medications into your garbage. If you have any extra oral medications, bring them back to your cancer centre pharmacy for proper disposal. Most local pharmacies are not able to dispose of cancer medications.

Injection systemic treatments

You may need to inject the treatments into a muscle or under the skin using a needle

- If you use a needle for your medications, you will get instructions from your nurse or pharmacist on how to safely handle the injection
- Wash your hands with soap and water after you're done
- Put all used cancer medication supplies such as syringes, tubes, cassettes, vials and bottles in a hard plastic container like a bleach or pop bottle and return them to your cancer centre

Can I travel with my systemic medications?

Yes, you can travel with them, but check with your pharmacist or health care team for more information.



Sometimes you need to make special arrangements. For example, some medications need to be stored in the fridge.

When you travel, always seal the medications in a plastic bag.

If you are flying, keep your medications in:

- their original containers
- your carry-on luggage so you always have them with you

Handling Systemic Treatment Spills at Home



A spill is not just a liquid – it could be the powder from a tablet cut in half or a broken capsule.

The spill came in contact with:

What you can do:



My eyes

- Wash your eyes under running water for at least 10 to 15 minutes.
- Keep your eyes open when you do this.
- Get medical attention right away.



My skin

- Wash the area with soap and running water for at least 10 to 15 minutes.
- Tell your health care team as soon as possible.



My clothes or linens

- Wear disposable gloves
- Wash your hands with soap and water after removing your gloves
- Wash them separately from other clothes and linens
- Wash through 2 complete washing machine cycles before you wear or use them again.



A surface like the floor or table

- Put on disposable gloves.
- If it's a liquid, absorb the spill using a paper towel before wiping up.
- Wash the area well with soap and water 3 times.
- Put all of the materials in a bag and doublebag. Tie tightly.



Paper materials
(for example Kleenex, books, magazines)

- If you spill medicine on paper items you cannot clean, add them to the bag of garbage.

If you have a special pump for your treatment, use the spill kit the cancer centre gave you to clean up any spills from the pump.

