

Allegheny Health Network
Chemotherapy/Targeted Therapy Patient Education Teaching Sheets

Call your physician if you experience any of the following:

- Temperature greater than 100.5 degrees F or 38.0 degrees C or if develop shaking chills, sore throat, frequency and/or burning with urination
- Bleeding – blood in sputum, urine, or stool, bleeding from gums, nosebleeds, or excessive bruising
- Shortness of breath, dizziness, or extreme fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting persists for more than 24 hours
- Diarrhea, constipation, abdominal discomfort or pain more than 24 hours
- Experiencing 4-5 loose stool a day
- Mouth soreness, difficulty swallowing or white patches in the mouth
- Rash- new or worsening

Recommendations

- Practice frequent hand washing

***Infection Precautions and Neutropenia**

- Wash and clean your hands frequently
- Neutropenia is a decrease in the number of white blood cells. These cells are the body's main defense against infection. If you are neutropenic please take the following precautions:
 - Avoid prepared luncheon meats
 - Carefully wash raw fruits and vegetables
 - Cook meat and eggs all the way through
 - Do not share food, drink cups or utensils
- Avoid the use of rectal thermometers, enemas or suppositories
- Clean your teeth and gums with a soft toothbrush at least 2 times per day
- Avoid crowded places and contact with people who are sick
- Shower and bathe daily and use unscented lotion to prevent your skin from becoming dry and cracked
- Protect your skin from direct contact with pet and bodily waste (urine or feces) by wearing vinyl or household cleaning gloves when cleaning up after your pet. Wash your hands immediately afterward
- Use gloves for gardening
- Try to keep all your household surfaces clean

***Diet**

- If you feel sick after chemo – try to eat a light diet like crackers or cereal with very little milk. This should pass in a day or two
- For weight loss, eat a diet high in calories. Foods containing fat such as ice cream are high in calories
- If you are having trouble eating solid foods or experiencing weight loss, calories can be supplemented with nutritional shakes (Ensure, Boost, etc) as needed
- Eat small frequent meals
- Avoid foods that are fatty, heavily salted, spicy, or sweet
- Avoid grapefruit and pomegranate juice because it may interact with your medication
- Limit the use of alcohol

***Mouth Care**

- Use a soft toothbrush
- Rinse with salt water and baking soda solution as needed (mix ½ teaspoon of table salt plus ½ teaspoon of baking soda in 1 quart of plain water)
- Use Vaseline to prevent cracking of lips
- Try to drink 6-8 glasses of water per day (dry mouth can make sores more painful)
- Avoid extremely hot liquids or foods that would burn your mouth.
- Check your mouth daily for mouth sores or white patches
- Do not use mouthwashes that contain alcohol

***Bowel Movements**

Constipation

- Make sure you are drinking at least six 8-ounce glasses of water every day
- Avoid caffeine
- If you go two days without a bowel movement, and this is unusual for you, ask your doctor for suggestions
- Increase high fiber foods – (examples include: berries, pears, vegetables, grains, apples, beans, shredded wheat)
- Increase physical activity as tolerated
- Avoid straining
- Take stool softeners/laxatives as directed by a healthcare provider

Diarrhea

- Consider starting BRAT diet which includes bananas, rice, applesauce and toast
- Avoid food/drinks that contain caffeine or lactos
- Avoid fried and spicy foods
- Drink at least 8-10 glasses of water per day to avoid dehydration
- Call office if diarrhea persists for greater than 24 hours or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Avoid fresh fruits and vegetables
- Take anti-diarrheals as directed by healthcare provider

***Pain Control:**

- Take your pain medication as directed - remember most pain medicine takes at least 30 minutes to take effect
- If your pain is not controlled or if you experience a new type of pain, call your physician
- Avoid driving or operating equipment when taking medications

*** Other**

- Avoid direct sunlight, wear sunglasses and sunscreen SPF > 30 to protect the skin
- Discuss the use of any over the counter medications with provider before taking

***Laundry:**

- Items soiled with chemotherapy waste, urine, feces, sweat, vomitus should be put in the washer immediately.
- Wash items separate from other laundry in hot water.
- If you do not have a washer, place in a sealed, plastic bag until you can get to a washer.

***Body Wastes:**

- Use the toilet as usual but flush twice with lid closed for 48 hours after receiving chemotherapy.
- Wash your hands well with soap and water after handling any urine, feces or vomitus at least 30-60 seconds
- Wash your skin if you get any urine, feces, or vomitus on it for at least 15 seconds.
- If anything splashes into your eyes, flush them with water for 15 minutes and notify your doctor.
- Pregnant women should avoid any direct contact with chemotherapy or contaminated waste.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Is it safe for family members to have contact with me during chemotherapy?

Yes. Being with loved ones is important. Eating together and enjoying activities are all safe.

Is it safe for my family to use the same toilet as me?

Yes. As long as the chemotherapy waste is cleaned from the toilet by wiping the seat with a Lysol or Chlorox wipe after each use.

What should I do if I lose control of my bowel or bladder?

Use a disposable, plastic-backed pad or diaper to absorb the urine or stool. Change immediately and wash skin for at least 15 seconds with soap and water. If you have any ostomy, handle as hazardous waste.

What if I use a bedpan, urinal or commode? What if I vomit?

You or your caregiver should wear gloves when emptying the wastes. Rinse the container with water after each use. And wash it with soap and water at least once daily.

Is it safe to be sexually active during my treatment?

Special precautions need to be taken. Speak with your physician or nurse.

Is it possible to become pregnant or father a child when receiving chemotherapy?

Yes. A reliable method of birth control should be used. Speak with your physician.

How should I store chemotherapy/hazardous medications in the home?

Store in a safe place away from children and pets. Do not store in the bathroom as the humidity may damage the drugs. Follow directions if to be kept refrigerated or protected from light.

Is it safe to dispose of chemotherapy/hazardous medications in the trash?

*No. You need to handle separately. If you are taking chemotherapy at home, by mouth, injection or intravenously, you should have a special container to place all waste and equipment. The company giving you your medications will provide you with a safe container for disposal. If you do not have a container, then place in a double bag and return to your physician or home care nurse for proper disposal. **Do not throw hazardous waste into the garbage!!!***

Can I travel with my chemotherapy/hazardous medications?

Usually this is not a problem. You may need special arrangements, so speak with your physician before arranging.

What should I do if I spill some chemotherapy/hazardous medications?

Put on 2 pairs of gloves. Absorb the spill with a disposable sponge. Clean the area with soap and water. Dispose of all materials in the hazardous waste container.

Contact _____ at _____ 24/7 for questions/concerns.

Patient Signature _____ Date _____ Time _____ am/pm