



## Your Safety Matters

### Hazardous Drug Precautions at Home: Oral Medication

This handout provides tips to safely handle oral cancer medication at home. By working safely with these drugs you can lessen the chance of exposure for yourself, family, friends, caregivers and the environment while you are receiving treatment.

You are being treated with a drug(s) called:

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#### *What are hazardous drug precautions?*

Hazardous drug precautions are used to make sure that other people do not come in contact with your cancer medication or body fluids. Although the risk is very low, it is important to be careful.

Casual contact (hugging, kissing, and touching) is safe. Family, friends and caregivers who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant can be near you. But, they should use extra care to avoid contact with your body fluids.

**Follow these hazardous precautions for 48 hours after you are no longer taking your oral medication.**

#### *What body fluids do I need to be careful with?*

Body fluids such as blood, bowel movements, urine, vomit, semen, and vaginal fluids may contain small amounts of your cancer medication. All of these fluids require careful handling.

#### *What if I come into contact with body fluid/waste?*

Wash the area well with warm water and soap. Repeat several times. A single, accidental exposure will not likely have any serious effects but further contact with body fluid should be avoided. Discuss the exposure with a family healthcare provider during your next scheduled visit.

#### *How do I handle my body wastes to keep everyone safe?*

You may use the toilet (septic tank or sewer) as usual. Put the lid down and then flush. Flush the toilet until all waste is cleared. Wash your hands well with soap and water after using the toilet.

If you use a bedpan, urinal, or commode or are vomiting in a basin, your caregiver must wear two pairs of disposable gloves when emptying the wastes into the toilet. Rinse any equipment with water after use. Wash the container with soap and hot water. Waste water used in cleaning can be carefully poured down the toilet.

If you do not have control of your bladder or bowels use a disposable diaper and a plastic backed absorbent pad to absorb urine or bowel movements. When soiled, change right away and wash your skin with soap and water. Use a moisture barrier on skin to protect from irritation.

If you have an ostomy (surgically created opening in the body for the discharge of waste), you and your caregiver must wear two pairs of disposable gloves when emptying or changing equipment.

### ***What if my body wastes spill?***

In the case of an accidental spill you or your caregiver should:

- Put on two pairs of disposable gloves.
- Clean up spills right away to prevent spread to other areas.
- Soak up as much of the spill as possible, using paper towels, toilet paper or disposable absorbent pads.
- Clean the area with soap and water, using paper towels/disposable cloths.
- Place soiled toilet paper in toilet, close lid, and then flush.
- Place soiled paper towels, absorbent pads, disposable cloths and gloves in a plastic bag, tie it tightly. Then place the bag into another bag, tie it tightly. This bag can go out with your regular garbage.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after disposing the trash and removing your gloves.

### ***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 two pairs of gloves when handling 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. Dispose of garbage directly into your garbage bin.
- Wash your hands, with soap and water, after removing gloves and disposing of the garbage.
- Keep all garbage out of reach of children and pets.

### ***Do I need to wash my dishes separately from others?***

It is safe to wash your dishes together with those others use.

### ***How should laundry soiled with my body fluids be cleaned?***

You or your caregiver should wear disposable gloves when handling laundry soiled with your body fluids. Dispose of gloves after one use and wash hands with soap and water.

Wash laundry in a load separate from other laundry. Wash soiled laundry twice with regular detergent in a washing machine using hot water. Do not hand wash these items. If soiled laundry cannot be washed right away, place it in a plastic garbage bag. Put this bag in a second garbage bag and tie it tightly. Keep the soiled laundry separate from other items until it can be washed.

### ***Can I have sex while receiving treatment?***

Sexual activity is safe when care is taken to contain fluids.

Use a condom during all sexual activity (vaginal, anal or oral) to prevent body fluids from coming in contact with your partner, even if you are using other birth control methods. Kissing is safe.

### ***Is it safe to have a baby while on cancer treatment?***

No. Some types of cancer treatment and other drugs can harm unborn babies. If either a man or a woman is taking cancer medication, pregnancy should be avoided for at least one year after completion of cancer treatment. Birth control pills alone may not be effective for contraception. It is important to discuss the most effective birth control method with your doctor.

### ***Is it safe to breastfeed while receiving treatment?***

No. Some types of cancer treatment and other drugs can be present in breast milk. If you are breastfeeding, talk to your doctor about the risks.

Family, friends or caregivers who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant should not have contact with your cancer treatment or body fluids.

### ***How do I bring urine or other samples requested to the hospital?***

You may need to bring samples to the hospital for tests. These samples should be placed in a container with a tight fitting lid and placed in a sealed bag.

### ***How do I store my cancer medication?***

A member of your healthcare team will tell you if your medication needs special storage. Most oral cancer treatment should be kept at room temperature:

- Keep it away from heat, sunlight and moisture.
- Do not put any other drugs in your cancer treatment container.
- Do not put your cancer medication in another container.
- Store your medication in a safe place out of reach of children and pets.
- Keep your medication away from other family member's drugs.
- Keep the medication away from where you store or eat your food and beverages.

If another person takes your medication, call 911 or go to the emergency department right away. If a pet eats your treatment, call your veterinarian or the animal emergency clinic nearest you right away.

Return damaged, unused, discontinued, or expired cancer medication to your cancer centre pharmacy. Do not flush it down the toilet or throw it out in your garbage.

### ***What if I spill my cancer treatment?***

If you spill your pills, tablets or capsules, wear gloves to pick them up and place them in a sealed plastic bag. Remove and dispose of gloves, and then wash your hands with soap and water. Contact your cancer pharmacy for further instructions.

### ***Can I travel while taking oral cancer medication?***

Talk to your nurse if you plan to travel. While you are travelling, your cancer medication container should be stored in a Ziploc® type bag and kept at the correct temperature.

***Do caregivers need to take precautions if they are helping give you your medication ?***

Yes. Caregivers should wear disposable gloves when giving you your medication. Caregivers should also wash their hands with soap and water before and after giving you your medication.

***Who should I talk to if I have questions about my treatment?***

Your healthcare team are here to help you and to answer any questions you might have about your treatment and care. Contact a member of your healthcare team immediately if you have taken an incorrect dose or have missed a dose of your medication. Contact:

- Allan Blair Cancer Centre (Regina): 306-766-2213
- Allan Blair Cancer Centre Pharmacy: 306-766-2816
- Saskatoon Cancer Centre: 306-655-2662
- Saskatoon Cancer Centre Pharmacy: 306-655-2680