

# Cytotoxic Precautions at Home

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This booklet describes what you, your family, friends and caregivers need to know about cytotoxic precautions. These precautions are used to keep your family members, friends and caregivers safe while you are taking your cancer treatment.

## Your cancer treatment

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

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This cancer treatment is cytotoxic. This means it can kill cancer cells and can harm healthy cells.

## What are cytotoxic precautions?

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

These precautions are needed when handling your cancer treatment or body fluids. Casual contact (hugging, kissing and touching) is safe.

Family, friends or 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 cancer treatment or body fluids.

Ask your nurse to tell you how long to follow cytotoxic precautions and write down the answer in the section below.

*I should follow cytotoxic precautions while I am taking cancer treatment and for \_\_\_\_\_ days after finishing my treatment.*

## What body fluids are cytotoxic?

Not all of your cancer treatment is used by your body. As your body breaks down treatment, some of it leaves your body in your urine. Other body fluids (such as blood, bowel movements, breast milk, semen, vomit and vaginal fluids) may contain small amounts of the cancer treatment. All these fluids are cytotoxic.

## How do I handle my body wastes?

You may use the toilet (septic tank or sewer) as usual. Everyone should sit to pee to reduce the risk of splashing. Put the lid down and then flush twice. Wash your hands well, with soap and water, after using the toilet.

If you use a bedpan, urinal, commode or incontinence products, or are vomiting in a basin, your caregiver should wear disposable gloves when emptying the wastes. Rinse any equipment with water after use. Wash it, at least once a day, with soap and water.

If you do not have control of your bladder or bowels use a disposable diaper or a plastic-backed absorbent pad to absorb urine or bowel movements. Wash any skin that touched body waste with water and mild soap. If you use incontinence products, try to change your pads often and wash the skin after each pad change.

If you have an ostomy, you and your caregiver should wear disposable gloves when emptying or changing appliances.

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

- Put on 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, then flush twice.
- 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 hands with soap and water after removing 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 gloves when handling anything soiled.

Put things you cannot flush down the toilet in a garbage bag, tie it tightly. Put this bag in a second garbage bag and tie it tightly. This bag can go out with your regular garbage.

Wash your hands, with soap and water, after removing and disposing of gloves. Keep garbage out of reach of children and pets.

### **What about my dishes?**

You do not have to wash your dishes separately.

### **What about laundry soiled with my body fluids?**

If your laundry has become soiled with your bodily fluids, you should wash it separately from all other laundry.

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

If you are not washing your laundry right away, place it in a garbage bag, tie it tightly. Put this bag in a second bag and tie it tightly. If laundry is not soiled with bodily fluids, it does not need to be washed separately.

### **What about sex?**

Being sexually active is safe; but, care needs to be taken. It is possible for small amounts of cytotoxic drugs to be in vaginal fluid and semen while you are on cytotoxic precautions.

Use a condom when having sex (penetration or oral) to prevent body fluids from coming in contact with your partner, even if you are using other birth control methods.

### **Is it safe to have a baby?**

No. Many types of cancer treatment can harm an unborn baby. If there is any chance of pregnancy happening, you must use two effective forms of birth control at the same time until at least 6 months after your last treatment dose (for example, condoms AND birth control pills). Talk to your cancer care team about which birth control options are best for you.

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

**Is it safe to breastfeed?**

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.

**How do I bring samples to the hospital?**

You may need to bring urine, blood or other samples to the hospital for tests. These samples should be placed in a container with a tight fitting lid. Then place the container in a sealed bag.

Contact your cancer care team if you have any additional questions.

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_





**Patient and family feedback is very important to us.**

**We would like to invite you to send any comments or suggestions on how to improve this booklet to [education.cancercare@nshealth.ca](mailto:education.cancercare@nshealth.ca) or feel free to call us at 1-866-599-2267.**

### **Looking for more health information?**

Find this brochure and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/cancer>

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For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider. The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.