

# Handling Hazardous Drugs and Waste at Home

## Home Health

There are medicines that can be helpful for treating an illness but can be harmful if they touch your skin. We call these **hazardous drugs**.

It is important to review all your medicines with a healthcare professional such as your family doctor, nurse practitioner, home care nurse, or pharmacist. They can explain the risks of the hazardous drug.

An example of hazardous drugs is chemotherapy. Chemotherapy is given either in pills **or** directly into the blood through a small flexible tube placed in a vein (called an intravenous or I.V. for short).

### Touching hazardous drugs

Wash your hands with soap and water after touching the hazardous drug. You do not need to wear gloves.

People who take part in your care should wear nitrile gloves when touching any hazardous drug. After taking off the gloves, they should wash their hands with soap and water.

### Taking tablets and capsules

Do not crush, cut, or chew hazardous drugs. Do not open capsules.

If you cannot swallow the tablet or capsule, talk with a pharmacist about options.

### Using an infusion pump

If you are getting your hazardous drug by I.V. using an infusion pump and you have been taught how to stop the pump when the drug is done, follow these steps.

1. Put the pump and tubing in the sealable bag provided by the B.C. Cancer Agency.
2. Seal the bag.
3. Keep the bag in a safe place, away from children and pets.
4. Return sealed bag to B.C. Cancer Agency when you go for your next chemotherapy treatment.

If the hazardous drug leaks from the infusion pump or tubing, stop the leak and clean up the spill. See the section on page 2 on "Cleaning up waste".

### Keeping hazardous drugs safe

Keep hazardous drugs in a place where children and pets cannot reach them.

If you have any extra hazardous drugs, return them to a pharmacy for disposal.

### Protecting others

In the **first 48 hours after taking hazardous drugs**, your body might get rid of some of the drugs through body wastes and/or bodily fluids. These wastes and fluids can be harmful to other people **in the first 48 hours**.

#### Body wastes and body fluids include:

- Urine (pee)
- Bowel movements (poop) including ostomy waste
- Vaginal fluids
- Semen
- Blood
- Vomit (throw up)
- Any fluids from wounds or bandages covering wounds

### Going to the bathroom

- Your family can share the toilet as long as you make sure:
  - You flush it after you use it.
  - The seat is clean and dry.
- Try not to splash or spill urine around the toilet. If there are splashes or spills, follow the instructions on page 2 on "Cleaning up waste".
- People with a penis should sit down to pee.
- Each time you use the toilet, close the lid and flush the toilet 2 times.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- If you have problems with holding your urine or bowel movements, protect furniture by wearing an absorbent undergarment or adult diaper, or placing a plastic sheet under your bed linens or on the chair.

# Handling Hazardous Drugs and Waste at Home - *continued*

## Vomiting

If you need to throw up or vomit:

1. Throw up in a container.
2. Empty the container into the toilet.
3. Close the toilet lid and flush the toilet 2 times.
4. Wash the container with soap and water.

## Having Sex

Use a condom when having sex, whether it is vaginal, anal or oral.

## Washing Laundry

Wash laundry with body waste or fluids separately in the washing machine or sink. Use regular laundry soap.

## Cleaning up waste

You will need:

- Nitrile gloves – Buy at any pharmacy or medical supply store
- Disposable cleaning supplies – Toilet paper, paper towel, and soap

You might also need:

- Cytotoxic (red) waste container – Ask your home care nurse if you need one. Your nurse will give you information on how to get and dispose of the container.

**Every time** you clean up waste or handle soiled items, wear one pair of nitrile gloves.

Change gloves any time you see any rips or tears in a glove.

Wash waste or fluids off the skin or any surfaces with soap and water.

Clean up spills as soon as possible.

For larger spills, pour the bucket of dirty water down the sink or toilet.

When taking off the gloves:

1. Remove the gloves and put them in your regular garbage
2. Wash your hands with soap and water.

Place the following in a double bag, seal, and put the bag in your regular garbage.

- all soiled disposable items, including wound bandages, ostomy bags, and feminine hygiene products
- all disposable cleaning supplies, including paper towels and plastic sheeting used to protect furniture

## For more information

Monday to Friday during the day, contact your home care nurse.

Any time of day or night, you can call HealthLink 8-1-1 to speak to a nurse.

## Home Health Offices

Abbotsford	604-556-5000
Agassiz	604-793-7160
Burnaby	604-918-7447
Chilliwack	604-702-4800
Hope	604-860-7747
Langley	604-532-6500
Maple Ridge	604-476-7100
Mission	604-814-5520
New Westminster	604-777-6700
South Delta	604-952-3552
Surrey/North Delta (Gateway)	604-953-4950
Surrey - Newton	604-572-5340
Tri Cities	604-777-7300
White Rock	604-541-6800
Home Health Service line	1-855-412-2121

## Questions:

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