

ORAL CANCER DRUGS

Key Information When Starting Treatment

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**Waterloo Wellington
Regional Cancer Program**

Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)

Why Is Safety Important?

Oral cancer drugs are pills that you swallow. They are just as strong and work just as well as intravenous (IV) cancer drugs. Cancer drugs kill cancer cells but can also damage normal cells.

Follow the instructions below to keep everyone safe by knowing how to handle oral cancer drugs and personal body fluids.

Types of Bodily Fluids

Body fluids are liquids made from inside your body. They can include:

- Pee
- Poo
- Vomit (puke)
- Sweat
- Semen
- Vaginal Fluid
- Phlegm
- Mucous
- Saliva (spit)

Getting Your Oral Cancer Drugs

For your oral cancer drugs:

- Your doctor, clinic nurse, and a pharmacist will go over the treatment with you before you start.
 - The pharmacist needs to review all your medicines and supplements to check for drug interactions with your treatment.
- Your healthcare team will tell you where to get your medicine. It may:
 - be delivered directly to you from a specialized pharmacy.
 - need to be picked up at the Cancer Centre Retail Pharmacy.
- Some treatment medicines can be transferred to your local pharmacy at a later date. Talk to your Cancer Centre Retail Pharmacist about this.
- You will follow-up with your Oncologist (cancer doctor) on a regular basis. You will be given enough medicine for the amount you are supposed to take before seeing the Oncologist again. Your doctor will prescribe more at your next visit.

Cancer Centre Retail Pharmacy

Learn more about getting your prescriptions from the Cancer Centre Retail Pharmacy.

wrhn.ca/resources/the-cancer-centre-retail-pharmacy



Taking Oral Cancer Drugs

- Do not crush, split, break or chew your oral cancer drugs.
- Ask your health care team what to do if you miss a dose.
- Call the cancer centre if you do not know how to take your cancer drugs **(519-749- 4380)**.

How to Store and Handle Oral Cancer Drugs

- Store in a cool, dry place.
- Keep away from food and drinks.
- Keep out of reach of children and pets.
- Keep oral cancer drugs in the container from the pharmacy.
- Do not mix oral cancer drugs in containers with other drugs.
- Caregivers should wear disposable gloves if they need to help you take the oral cancer drug.
- When you touch your oral cancer drug, wash your hands with soap and water.

Safety at Home

Refer back to [Side Effects to Watch for on Chemotherapy](#) and the drug information handout given to you by your healthcare team to learn about side effects from your treatment.

Chemotherapy can stay in your body for at least 48 hours (2 days) after your last treatment, but this may vary depending on the type of medication. You should follow safety precautions for a minimum of 48 hours after your last dose, or longer if advised by your healthcare team. For example, if you took your oral chemotherapy on Monday, you will follow safety precautions for 48 hours after your last dose.

You will need to follow steps for safety while using the bathroom, being intimate, and cleaning up body fluids. This will help to keep you, and your loved ones, safe.

You can also refer to each treatment guide online or visit the J. Wesley Graham Patient & Family Resource Centre for a printed copy.



IV Chemotherapy



46 Hour Infuser Pump



Side Effects to Watch For On Chemotherapy

IV Chemotherapy: wrhn.ca/resources/intravenous-chemotherapy

46-Hour Infuser Pump: wrhn.ca/resources/46-hour-pump

Side Effects to Watch For On Chemotherapy: wrhn.ca/resources/side-effects-to-watch-for-on-chemotherapy

Supplies To Keep On Hand

The items below are good to have on hand at home while you are on chemotherapy.

- A bucket
- Dish soap
- Paper towels
- Nitrile gloves (disposable) - found at the pharmacy
- Sealed plastic bags (Ziploc bags)

Safely Throwing Items Away

When taking oral chemotherapy treatment you will have to follow special steps to throw items away that have come in contact with your body fluids. Try to use disposable (one-time use) items.

This allows you to throw them away easily and safely. For example:

- Diapers
- Paper towels
- Pads
- Bandages
- Dressings
- Gloves
- Stoma Bags
- Catheter Bags
- Plastic Bed Sheets



Children, and people who are pregnant or breastfeeding, should not handle or clean up spills from someone on chemotherapy.

To safely throw these items away you should:

1. Put on disposable gloves.
2. Put the item(s) inside a plastic bag, then tie it closed.
3. Put that bag into a 2nd plastic bag, then tie it closed too. This is called “doubled bagging”.
4. Put the bags into your garbage shoot or garage as soon as possible. Don’t leave them in your regular kitchen or bathroom garbage where children, grandchildren, or pets can touch them.

Using the Toilet

It is safe to share a bathroom with others as long as you clean up splashes or spills safely.

When going to the bathroom:

- Always sit down to use the toilet.
- When you are finished, close the toilet lid.
- Flush the toilet **2 times**.
- If you do not have your own bathroom, make sure to wipe any splashes on the toilet with a disinfectant wipe (like Clorox® or Lysol®) as soon as possible after each use.
- Wash your hands with soap and water when you are done.

You should also follow the above information if you vomit into a toilet, bucket, or bowl. Always wear disposable gloves when cleaning any of these items.

If you need to use a reusable urinal or bedpan:

- Empty contents into the toilet slowly, trying not to splash.
- Close the lid of the toilet.
- Flush the toilet **2 times**.
- Clean the reusable urinal or bedpan with warm, soapy water.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.



A reusable bedpan (top) and urinal (bottom).

Cleaning Up Laundry

When you are at home, you might get body fluids on clothing, bed sheets, or undergarments. If they are soiled you will need to wash them safely.

Before you begin to clean up:

1. Wear gloves. Throw them away after use.
2. When possible, flush any collected body fluids down the toilet. Close the lid of the toilet and flush 2 times.
3. Wash your hands with soap and water after cleaning.

If you have gotten body fluids on your clothing or bed sheets, you should:

- Wash any clothing, towels, or bedding right away.
- Wash them alone, in a separate load from other clothes or laundry.
- Wash 2 times in soap and hot water
- Dry them as you normally would

Sex and Intimacy

During cancer treatment, you and your partner might need to change how you express intimacy.

You may not be able to have sex the same way as before. If you are planning to have sex:

- Always use a condom to protect your partner (including during oral sex). A small amount of chemotherapy may be present in semen and vaginal fluids.
- Talk to your primary healthcare provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) about birth control.
- Talk to your healthcare team if you have any pain, discomfort, or other concerns.

The amount of chemotherapy that transfers into saliva is very small. Kissing is safe at any time while on chemotherapy.



cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/35051

Common Questions

These are common questions you might have when starting chemotherapy. If you don't see your question here, write it down and ask your doctor or nurse at your next visit.

How do I get rid of pills that I no longer need?

Return any unused cancer drugs or cancer drug bottles to your hospital pharmacy. Empty pill bottles should not be recycled. **Do not flush your pills down the toilet or throw them in the garbage.**

I don't have my premedications for my next round of treatment. What should I do?

Your Oncologist will renew the prescription for your next round of premedications when you see them for follow-up.

Is there a specific way to wash my dishes and cutlery?

No, you can continue to wash your dishes and cutlery the normal way. There is no need to wash separate from other dishes.

Who To Call With Questions

If you have questions about your cancer care, or side effects from your cancer/treatment, you can call your cancer healthcare team.

WRHN Cancer Centre call centre
8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday.
519-749-4380

If you need support outside of these hours you will need to contact CareChart Digital Health:

1-877-681-3057

www.carechart.ca

Use this resource for your information only. It does not replace medical advice from your doctor or other healthcare professionals.



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cancerwaterloowellington.ca

