

# Guidelines for dealing with waste products at home for 7 days after chemotherapy

## Information for patients and their carers

Chemotherapy drugs, also referred to as cytotoxic drugs, are used in the treatment of cancer.

These drugs are known to be toxic to cell growth within the body.

It is important that patients and their care-givers take precautions in the home when handling the patient's waste, cleaning equipment involved, and managing laundry and spills. Body waste refers to urine, vomit, faeces, fluid drained by body cavities and sweat (in some circumstances, dependent on treatment).

It is **highly** recommended that breast feeding and/or pregnant women not act as care-givers for a patient during their chemotherapy treatments.

The following equipment should be available in the patient's home, while receiving chemotherapy treatment:

- Supply of latex gloves
- Detergent

(Note: If using a bowl for vomit, line with plastic bag and ensure it is used for nothing else).

## Waste Management

Traces of chemotherapy leave the body in the patient's blood, vomit, urine and faeces – all known as the patient's body waste.

Research suggests that traces of chemotherapy may be found in the patient's body waste for up to 7 days after completion of chemotherapy. Care should be taken when handling these wastes throughout this time.

- Body wastes containing traces of chemotherapy may be disposed of in the normal sewerage system.
  - Close the lid of the toilet and use a full flush.
  - Normal toilet cleaning regime should be sufficient while the patient is receiving chemotherapy.
- Wastes from colostomy/ urostomy bags can be treated in the same way. Gloves must be worn when handling these bags.
- Any contaminated ostomy bags, dressings, incontinence pads or used gloves, should be placed into a plastic bag, sealed, then placed into a larger strong plastic bag before disposal into the normal household rubbish bin.

Patient's and care-givers **must** wash their hands thoroughly after handling bodily wastes.

## Laundry Management

- It is recommended that contaminated clothing and bed linen be washed immediately and separately from other items in either hot or cold wash on the longest cycle, twice.
  - If immediate washing is not possible, store contaminated linen in a sealed plastic bag until washed.
- It is not advisable to use linen that requires dry cleaning (eg: doona).
- Two pairs of gloves should be worn while handling the articles to be washed.

## Spill Management

For cleaning a small quantity of contaminated body waste on a surface, for example a toilet seat:

1. Put on two pairs of gloves.
2. Wipe up spill with either flushable paper into the toilet, or paper towelling/disposable cloth and place into a plastic bag, seal bag then place into a larger strong plastic bag before disposal into the normal household rubbish bin.
3. Clean area with water and detergent.
4. Wash cleaning equipment and rinse well.
5. Dispose of gloves into two sealed plastic bags as like above and dispose into the normal household rubbish.

A spill kit will be provided to those patients receiving chemotherapy in the home environment.

## First Aid Resources

If the skin is splashed with chemotherapy contaminated wastes, wash the affected area with warm running water and soap, for approximately 15 minutes.

If the eyes are splashed, wash for approximately 15 minutes.

Ensure visitors into the home are not put at risk, for example community services / plumbers. Inform them that you have received chemotherapy within the last 7 days.

**It is important to note that this is only a reference. The best source of information is still your Primary Health Care Provider.**

## Contact Information

### Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital

#### Oncology Day Therapy Unit

Phone (07) 3646 8749

**Business Hours:**

7am-6pm Monday – Friday

8am- 4pm Saturday and Sunday

#### Oncology Procedure Unit

Phone (07) 3646 1905

**Business Hours:**

7:30am-5pm Monday – Friday

#### North Lakes Cancer Care Services

Phone (07) 3646 1905

**Business Hours:**

8am- 5pm Monday – Thursday

#### After Hours

Contact Ward 5C or 6AS through the RBWH main switchboard

Phone: (07) 3646 8111

### The Prince Charles Hospital Day Oncology Unit

Phone (07) 31395730

**Business Hours:**

8am-4:30pm Monday – Friday

#### After Hours

TPCH Main Switchboard

Phone: (07) 31394000

### Redcliffe Day Oncology Unit

Phone (07) 38837196

**Business Hours:**

7:30am-5:30pm Monday – Friday

#### After Hours

Redcliffe Main Switchboard

Phone: (07) 38837777

## Kilcoy Hospital

Phone (07) 54338663

### **Business Hours:**

8am–4:30pm Monday – Friday

## After Hours

Kilcoy Main Switchboard

Phone: (07) 54224411

### References

Safe Handling of Cytotoxic Drugs and Related Wastes: Guidelines for South Australian Health Services 2012