

Sex and intimacy

During your cancer treatment, you and your partner are safe to continue your favorite activities, hug and kiss. However, there are some safety steps you should follow during your treatment.

It is important to practice safe sex while having cancer treatment. If you are having any type of sex, you and your partner should use a barrier method like condoms as a safeguard to protect your partner from being exposed to the chemotherapy medicine that may be in your vagina or semen fluids.

Chemotherapy can harm an unborn baby. Talk to your doctor or nurse about contraception to prevent pregnancy during treatment.

Avoid open-mouth kissing for up to 7 days after your treatment. Your saliva may contain chemicals from your chemotherapy medication.

Common questions

Can I hug and touch my family?

Yes, it is safe to hug and touch your partner, family and friends.

Can I share the same toilet as others?

Yes. If body fluids splash on the toilet seat, wash with soapy water before others use the toilet. Wash your hands thoroughly after.

Can I share towels with others?

No. It's best to have your own towel and not share towels with other people throughout your treatment.

Can I share utensils with others?

Yes, as long as they have been washed with water and detergent before use.

Chemotherapy Safety at home



Cancer medications

Cancer medications include chemotherapy, immunotherapy and targeted therapies. Chemotherapy works by damaging or killing the cancer cells and normal cells in your body.

When you have chemotherapy, small amounts of chemicals from the chemotherapy medicine can be found in your body fluids. For example, your pee, poo, blood, mucus, saliva, vomit, semen or vaginal fluids. It is important to reduce the chance of your family or caregiver being exposed to your cancer medications.

Most chemotherapy medicines can remain in the body for up to 48 hours (2 days) but some can take up to 7 days to leave the body after each treatment.

Advice

The risk of harm is low but it is advised to follow these recommendations and general safety tips to stay safe:

- **Using the toilet**

You should sit down when you use the toilet, even if you usually stand. Close the toilet lid before flushing to avoid splash back. Wash your hands with soap and water when you are finished.

If you have bladder or bowel incontinence, use an incontinence sheet/sanitary pad on your bed/mattress or cushion to catch any leaks and wash them as described on the next page.

- **Colostomy-ostomy-drains**

Dispose of any waste in your general rubbish bin. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water afterwards.

- **Vomit**

If you are experiencing episodes of vomiting, vomit in the toilet bowl if you can or use a plastic bag. Thoroughly clean the toilet and the surrounding area with soap and water. Dispose of the plastic bag in a general rubbish bin. Wash hands with soap and water.

- **Blood**

If you bleed after a cut or have a nosebleed, apply pressure until it stops. Use paper towels to soak up any spills. Use a disposable cloth and warm soapy water to wash down the affected surface until visibly clean. Then disinfect with antibacterial spray and dry the area with paper towel.

Put the used cleaning materials into a plastic bag and dispose of in your general rubbish bin.

If you experience any heavy bleeding or you are worried about losing a lot of blood after a cut, contact the 'SOS Hotline' or go to your nearest A&E.

- **Washing clothing and bed linen**

For any soiled clothing, wash items on their own straight away in your washing machine. Wash on the longest cycle with hot water and detergent.

If it is not possible to wash straight away, place items in a leakproof plastic bag and wash them as soon as possible.