

Chemotherapy administration at home

Chemotherapy medications can be given to your child in different ways at home:

- Subcutaneously (injected under the skin) via an Insuflon
- Orally via the mouth or nasogastric tube

Chemotherapy medications are cytotoxic and work by killing cancer cells. During this process they can also damage normal cells. It is important to handle cytotoxic medications (such as tablets and pre-filled syringes) with care at home to avoid unnecessary exposure. Each time your child has chemotherapy, it may take up to seven days for the chemotherapy to leave the body. Special precautions are needed during this time when handling your child's bodily fluids (eg. urine, vomit and faeces).

It is important to follow safe handling precautions when giving your child cytotoxic medications especially if you are pregnant. Ask your pharmacist for further information.

Administering chemotherapy at home

If you need to administer chemotherapy at home, you will be provided with;

- The medication (in the form of tablets, half tablets, capsules, liquid or pre-filled syringes)
- A medication diary to follow and sign
- All consumables required including oral syringes, syringe caps, gloves and waste containers

It is important to

- Store the medication at home in a safe place and out of reach of children
- Give the medication exactly as prescribed by the doctors
- Sign for each dose on the medication diary provided and return to the oncology pharmacy when completed
- Bring your diary to hospital if admitted or if you have an appointment
- Wash hands thoroughly before and after administering chemotherapy medications
- Wear purple nitrile gloves when handling chemotherapy
- Do NOT crush, break or chew the medication. Tablets can be dispersed into a liquid form. Capsules can be opened and mixed with food such as yoghurt or applesauce
- Dispose of used gloves, syringes and caps into double bags and dispose of after each dose

What if my child vomits after I give the medication?

- Contact the Haematology/Oncology Triage Phone 0410 717 816
- Do not give a replacement dose unless instructed
- Use anti-nausea medication as directed

What if I forget to give my child a dose?

Contact the Haematology/Oncology Triage Phone 0410 717 816

- Do not make up a missed dose unless instructed
- Continue taking medication as usual when the next dose is due to be given



What if I have unused medication at home?

Return the medications to the Oncology Pharmacy to dispose of safely including any used syringes in sharps containers.

Steps for dispersing chemotherapy tablets:

Where your child cannot swallow tablets whole, they may be dispersed in water then given my mouth. See the steps below on how to disperse chemotherapy tablets safely.

Step 1:

Wash hands thoroughly and put on purple gloves.



Step 2:

Prepare in a clean area. Take a new purple syringe cap and syringe, remove the syringe plunger.



Step 3:

Place tablets required to make up the dose into the syringe.



Step 4:

Place plunger back into syringe.



Step 5:

Draw up a volume of water, 5mL is usually sufficient.



Step 6:

Place purple cap onto tip of syringe and gently shake. The tablet may take some time to disperse.



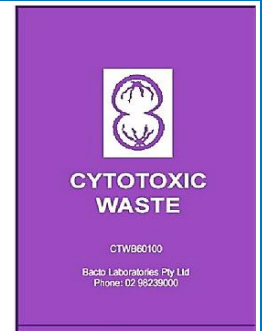
Step 7:

Once dispersed, the dose can be given orally or via a nasogastric tube (remember to flush tube after giving medications).



Step 8:

Double bag used oral syringe, cap and gloves and dispose with household waste. Wash hands thoroughly. Clean area where medication was prepared.



For further information contact PCH Oncology Pharmacy Mon- Fri between 8.30am – 5.00pm Phone: 6456 0190 option 3 OR Haem/Oncology triage # 0410 717 816



Government of Western Australia
Child and Adolescent Health Service



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