This handout is for cancer patients, family members and caregivers. It contains advice on how to handle cancer drugs and the body fluids (e.g. urine) of patients in the home during and after taking cancer drugs.

**How should cancer drugs be handled?**
- Caregivers and family members should wear protective gloves (i.e. rubber or medical exam gloves) when touching any cancer drug
- All cancer drugs must be stored out of reach of children and pets
- Unused cancer drugs should be returned to a pharmacy for disposal
- **Always wash hands with soap and water** after taking off gloves when handling cancer drugs

**Oral tablets and capsules:**
- Cancer patients may handle oral tablet and capsule cancer drugs without wearing gloves and should wash hands with soap and water afterwards
- If oral tablets or capsules are difficult to swallow, ask a pharmacist for advice
- Tablets should not be broken, crushed or chewed; capsules should not be opened except when instructed to do so by a pharmacist

**Infusion pump (Infusor™):**
- The chemotherapy nurse will explain how to monitor the Infusor™ and what to watch for
- If the cancer drug given through the Infusor™ accidently leaks from the container, stop the leak, clean up the spill (see page 2 - How to clean up spilled cancer drug) and call the daytime or after hours contact number provided by the chemotherapy nurse

**Why is there a special handling period for body fluids and how long does it last?**
After taking the cancer drug, the patient’s body breaks down the drug. The drug leaves the body in fluids (e.g. urine) or semi-fluids (e.g. feces, vomit). Caregivers and family members should avoid having skin contact or eye/mouth contact (i.e. splashes) with the patient’s body fluids.

There is no clear general time limit for how long cancer drugs stay in the patient’s body after treatment. Special handling is usually needed for two days after a single treatment. If a cancer drug is taken every day, special handling is needed the entire time, until two days after the patient stops taking the drug.

**What about sexual contact?**
Cancer drugs may be present in a patient’s saliva, vaginal fluids and semen after treatment. For many cancer drugs, the use of a condom is recommended to prevent the partner from coming into contact with the patient’s body fluids, even if other birth control methods are used. Some cancer drugs may require further precautions. Speak to a member of your cancer care team about precautions during sexual contact.

**General disposal of body fluids and supplies**
- **Wear protective gloves**
- Body fluids (urine, vomit, feces) can be flushed down the toilet. Close the lid and flush completely twice.
- Some disposable items cannot be flushed down the toilet: place them in a plastic bag, sealed or tied tightly after use. Put the plastic bag into a second garbage bag, tie it tightly, and then put it in the regular garbage.
- Remove protective gloves and wash hands with soap and water when tasks are completed
- Rubber gloves may be cleaned with soap and water and reused. Medical exam gloves should be disposed of after use
Advice for family members and caregivers during the special handling period

- Family members and caregivers should wear protective gloves when handling linens, supplies, devices and equipment soiled with the patient’s body fluids or with spilled cancer drugs.
- If there are difficulties with bladder or bowel control:
  - Wear absorbent undergarments; use a disposable plastic backed pad / liner on the bed or resting area.
  - Change underwear and pad / liner immediately when soiled; wash the patient’s skin with soap and water.
  - Place a plastic sheet under the bed sheet to cover and protect the mattress.
- Used disposable items are sealed and double-bagged for disposal (see page 1 – General disposal).
- Keep a plastic container (e.g. an ice cream bucket) close if the patient is throwing up.
- Wash non-disposable containers used to collect body fluids with hot soapy water and rinse; empty the water into the toilet, then close lid and flush twice. Dry the containers with disposable paper towels.
- Remove protective gloves and wash hands with soap and water when tasks are completed.
- Wash dishes the normal way - no need to wash them separately or do anything special.

Tips for washroom use during the special handling period

- Male patients should sit down to urinate to reduce splashing.
- Patients should flush the toilet twice after use, with the lid down.
- Others may use the same toilet, as long as they know that spilled or splashed fluids have been cleaned from the surfaces.

How to clean up spilled cancer drug or body fluids during the special handling period

Clean up as soon as possible to avoid the fluids spreading to other areas.

- Wear protective gloves.
- Use disposable absorbent supplies (e.g., paper towels) to soak/wipe up as much of the spill as possible, then:
  - Clean surfaces using disposable cloths soaked in soapy water (e.g. dish detergent).
  - Rinse the area with water and clean with a new disposable cloth.
- Used disposable items are sealed and double-bagged for disposal (see page 1 – General disposal).
- Wash non-disposable items (e.g. bedpan) that have come in contact with spilled cancer drug or body fluids with hot soapy water and rinse. Dry with disposable paper towels.
- Remove protective gloves and wash hands with soap and water when tasks are completed.

How to handle soiled laundry during the special handling period

- Wear protective gloves to handle clothes and linens that are soiled with the patient’s body fluids.
- Wash the soiled clothing, sheets and towels twice. First wash separately from other laundry in the washing machine, using hot water and regular laundry detergent, then wash a second time with regular laundry.
- If soiled linens / clothes are not washed right away, place them in a plastic bag and tie the bag closed until they can be washed.
- Linens that are not soiled with patient’s body fluids or spilled cancer drugs can be washed together with other laundry.

What to do when skin or eyes come in contact with cancer drug or body fluids

- If the patient’s body fluid or cancer drug splashes into anyone’s eyes, rinse the eyes gently with water for 15 minutes.
- If skin comes in contact with the patient’s body fluids or cancer drug, wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water; repeat at least once.