Let's Talk ABOUT...

Chemotherapy and other hazardous drugs require extra caution. These medicines are used for cancer treatment. They also include medicine used to make the immune system not work as well (make it easier for your child to get an infection) and medicines used to treat some viruses. You must handle these medicines with special care to protect the patient, those handling the medicine, and anyone in the area where you prepare them.

There is no reason to limit contact with a person receiving these medicines. You will need to handle the following items with special care:

- The medicine itself and anything that touches it such as syringes and IV tubing.
- The patient's body fluids and anything that comes into contact with them such as sheets, towels, clothing, diapers, and incontinence pads.

Protecting hospital staff

Hospital staff take extra caution when handing these medicines and the wastes related to them. They wear a gown and gloves. They also may wear a mask or goggles. They need to practice this extra care because hospital workers care for many different patients who receive these medicines.

Protecting family and caregivers

Families and caregivers also need to take extra care. The body fluids of a patient receiving hazardous drugs (hazardous medicines) must be be treated carefully. Body fluids include blood, vomit, stool, urine, or sexual fluids. Follow these tips during treatment with hazardous drugs and for 48 hours after each dose:

- **Use gloves.** Anyone caring for the patient should wear gloves when handling any body fluid.
- Treat soiled diapers or incontinence pads as hazardous waste. In the hospital, these will be disposed in yellow hazardous waste containers.

Chemotherapy and hazardous drugs safety in the hospital and at home

At home, place diapers or incontinence pads in a designated container that is out of the reach of children or pets.

• Pregnancy or breastfeeding means extra caution. If you, family, or caregivers are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to become pregnant, they can still be in contact with your child. They should use extra care when they touch the medicine or contaminated wastes in any way.

Handling laundry

Handle soiled laundry items carefully while your child receives treatment and for 48 hours after each dose. Wear gloves and carry soiled items away from your body. Wash soiled or wet linens or clothing separately from your other laundry. Machine wash them in hot water through two full wash and rinse cycles.

Chemotherapy or hazardous drugs on the skin or in eyes

Chemotherapy or hazardous drugs on the skin or in eyes may irritate the skin or eyes. Follow these tips:

- **If it gets on your skin,** wash and rinse the area thoroughly using soap and water. If the area stays red for more than an hour, call your doctor.
- **If it gets into the eye,** immediately flush the eye for 15 minutes using tap water. Contact your doctor at once for more instructions.
- If your child uses diapers or incontinence pads keep her skin clean and dry, since there is medicine in urine or stool. Change diapers or pads often and use a protective cream to avoid skin irritation.

Protecting against infection

Chemotherapy and other medicines used to make the immune system not work as well may interfere with the body's ability to fight infections. While your child receives these medicines, she should stay away from

people who are sick and wash her hands often. Caregivers and any visitors also should wash hands often and thoroughly.

Storing medicines at home

Keep all medicines in their original, labeled container and out of the reach of children or pets. Store medicines as directed on the label, for instance in the refrigerator or out of light.

Disposing supplies

If you need any special supplies to give your child's medicine, such as IV tubing, your child's home care company will provide you with a biohazard waste container. Dispose all supplies used to give the medicine in this container. When the container is ¾ full or the treatment is complete, call the home care company to arrange to pick it up.

Managing a chemotherapy or hazardous drug spill

If your child is receiving IV chemotherapy or other IV hazardous drugs, you will receive a spill kit to use if the medicine should spill. The spill kit contains all the supplies you need. Here is what to do if there is a spill:

- **Protect others.** Make sure no one touches the medicine.
- **Use the spill kit**. Open the spill kit and follow the instructions on the outside of the box.
- **Protect yourself.** Put on gloves and other protective items such as a mask and gown.

- **Use the hazard bag.** Place everything used to clean up the spill in the special hazard bag. Do not throw the bag in the regular trash. Do not leave the bag where children or pets may open or disturb it.
- **Notify your homecare nurse** about the spill. The nurse will:
 - Tell you what to do with the bag of hazardous waste
 - If you miss a dose, contact your child's doctor to decide what you need to do.
 - Arrange to obtain a new spill kit.

When to call for help

If your child has a life-threatening emergency, call 911 or the Emergency Medical Service number for your area.

If your child has unexpected or severe side effects from the medicine such as rash, fever, excessive bleeding, or unusual bleeding, call your child's doctor.



Pediatric Education Services 801.662.3500 Rev. 09/10

© Primary Children's Medical Center 2009

All of the information contained in the *Let's Talk About*... series is for educational purposes only. This educational information is not a substitute for medical advice or for care from a physician or other health care professional. If you have questions about your child's health, contact your health care provider.