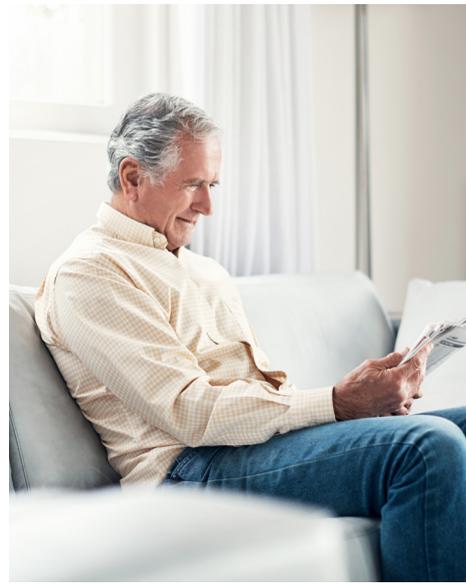


Your Guide to Taking **Oral Chemo**



Pocket Slit

About this book



This book is your guide to taking oral chemo.

Use this book along with:

- **My Chemo Guide** – a book about common side effects from chemo and how to manage them.
- **The Red Sheet** – a two-sided handout that lists problems you need to look for and call your cancer doctor about.
- **Medication handout(s)** – detailed patient education sheets about your oral chemo.
- **Oral Chemo Tracking Form** – a form to help you keep track of when you take your oral chemo and any side effects.

Your nurse should give you each of these items. If you have any questions after reading this book, or if you need copies of any of the items listed above, please speak with your cancer doctor or nurse.

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This info is a general health resource. It is not meant to replace your doctor’s advice. Ask your doctor or health care team any questions. Always follow their instructions.

Things to do before you start taking oral chemo



Complete the items on this checklist before you start taking oral chemo.

- Ask your cancer doctor these questions before taking oral chemo:
 - Do I need to see a dentist?
 - Do I need to get any vaccines such as those for the flu, pneumonia or chicken pox?
 - Should I talk with a reproductive doctor about whether I can have children after treatment?
 - Should I go to chemo class?

- Make sure you have a thermometer that works. If you are not feeling well, you will need to check your temperature quickly to see if you have a fever.

Some chemo drugs can weaken your immune system and make it harder for your body to fight infections (sickness). You will need to avoid infections and watch for signs of infection. Before starting oral chemo, read **Infection and Low White Blood Cell Count** section in the **My Chemo Guide**. Share this info with your family and friends. Speak with your cancer doctor or nurse if you have questions after reading it.

- Read the rest of this guide, as well as the **My Chemo Guide** book and **Red Sheet**. Share these items with caregivers, friends and family if you wish.

- Buy a box of gloves in case a family member or caregiver needs to help you take your oral chemo. Gloves that say “chemotherapy tested” on the box and meet the ASTM D6978-05 standard are best.

- Write down any questions you have. Talk with your cancer doctor or nurse to get the answers.

Keeping an up-to-date medicine list



For your safety, you need to keep an up-to-date list of all the medicines you take.

Make sure your medicine list includes any:

- Prescribed medicines from any doctor – be sure to include your oral chemo
- Over-the-counter medicines – even if you only take them as needed
- Vitamins and minerals
- Herbs and supplements
- Allergies and/or reactions to medicines

Any time you go to the doctor or hospital, bring your medicine list with you. Your health care team needs to review the list with you to make sure they have the most current info on file.

Tell your family or friends where you keep your medicine list, in case of an emergency. If you need help making a medicine list, please speak with your nurse.

Call your cancer doctor if:

- There are any changes to the medicines you take, such as new prescriptions from other doctors.
- You cannot take your medicines because you feel too sick.



Common questions and answers about oral chemo

What is oral chemo?	<p>Chemo (chemotherapy) are medicines used to stop cancer cells from growing and spreading to other parts of the body. Oral chemo is taken by mouth. Oral chemo can come in a pill, capsule, tablet or liquid form. You will be taking your oral chemo at home.</p> <p>Oral chemo is strong medicine. It can cause side effects and interact with other medicines. You must take it as prescribed and follow up often with your cancer doctor.</p>
How will I get my oral chemo?	<p>Your nurse will tell you how and where you can get your oral chemo. You may have to use a mail-order or specialty pharmacy or you may be able to pick it up at your local pharmacy.</p> <p>When and where you get your oral chemo from often depends on your insurance plan. The process to get oral chemo can often take at least seven to 10 days.</p> <p>Once you start oral chemo, it is important that you keep taking it on the schedule your doctor has ordered. If the pharmacy does not contact you a week before your oral chemo needs to be refilled or the pharmacy tells you there are no more refills on your oral chemo, please call your doctor's office. Do not wait until you are almost out of your oral chemo.</p>
How much does oral chemo cost?	<p>Oral chemo can cost a lot of money. Your insurance may pay all or just a part of the cost. You may have a copay for your oral chemo.</p>
What if I can't pay for my oral chemo?	<p>If you have concerns about paying for your chemo, ask to speak to one of our social workers. They can see if you can get financial aid from the company that makes your oral chemo or an assistance program.</p>

Common questions and answers about oral chemo (continued)

How long do I need to take oral chemo?	You may need to take oral chemo for a long time. Keep taking your oral chemo until your cancer doctor tells you to stop.
What if the package my oral chemo is in appears damaged or broken?	Don't use chemo from a damaged or broken package. If the package of your oral chemo is damaged or broken, call the pharmacy that you received your oral chemo from right away.
What if my oral chemo does not arrive?	If your oral chemo is being sent to you and you do not get your first shipment , call your cancer doctor's office. If your oral chemo is being sent to you and you do not get your refill , call the specialty pharmacy that provides your oral chemo and your cancer doctor's office.
What if I miss a dose or forget to take my oral chemo?	Call your cancer doctor as soon as you can if you miss a dose of your oral chemo.
What if I cannot swallow the pills or I throw up?	If you cannot swallow your chemo pills, call your cancer doctor's office and ask what you should do. Never crush tablets or open capsules without talking to your cancer doctor or nurse first. If you throw up after taking your oral chemo, call your cancer doctor's office.
What else do I need to know?	The next few pages list basic guidelines for taking oral chemo. Be sure to read them before starting your oral chemo and talk with your cancer doctor or nurse if you have any questions.

Basic guidelines for taking oral chemo

Chemo is a strong drug that can harm healthy cells, as well as cancer cells. Therefore, you must be careful when taking oral chemo. Follow these basic safety guidelines:

Call before taking your first dose

Before taking your first dose of oral chemo, call your cancer doctor's office and speak with your nurse. Your nurse needs to review your treatment schedule with you **before** you start taking your oral chemo. They will want to make sure you know how to take your oral chemo and answer any questions.

How you take oral chemo depends on the drug. Some oral chemo needs to be taken with food and some without. You may also need to avoid taking certain medicines or foods because they can change how well your oral chemo works or cause side effects or other problems. Talk with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have questions.

Follow your cancer doctor's orders

Not taking your oral chemo as prescribed may affect how well it works.

- Always take your oral chemo exactly how your cancer doctor tells you to and take it at the same time(s) each day.
- Take the exact amount of oral chemo prescribed. Taking more than what is ordered may harm you. Taking less may not be enough to help you.
- Your cancer doctor is the only person who should change the amount of oral chemo you are taking.

As your body starts to respond to the chemo, you may start to feel better. You may even feel like you do not need the chemo, but it is vital that you keep taking it until your cancer doctor tells you to stop. If you stop taking your oral chemo for any reason, you must call and let your cancer doctor know as soon as possible.



If you stop taking your oral chemo for any reason, you must call and let your cancer doctor know as soon as possible.

Basic guidelines for taking oral chemo (continued)

Be careful when handling oral chemo

- It's best if you do not touch oral chemo with bare hands. Instead, pour pills from the bottle into the cap of the container. For unit doses, open the package carefully.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water **before and after** taking your oral chemo.
- If someone is helping you take your oral chemo, they need to:
 - Wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
 - Dry their hands with a clean towel.
 - Put on gloves before touching your oral chemo. Gloves that say “chemotherapy tested” on the box and meet ASTM D6978-05 standard are best.
 - Take off the gloves when they are done helping you, turning the gloves inside out as they remove them. Grab the outside edge of one glove near the wrist. Pull and peel the glove away from the hand so it is turned inside out once it is off. Hold the removed glove in the gloved hand. Slide 1 or 2 fingers of the ungloved hand under the wrist of the other glove. Peel the glove off from the inside, making a bag for both gloves. Place gloves in a plastic bag before putting in the trash.
 - Wash their hands again with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Do not let children or pregnant women touch your oral chemo.
- Use a disposable plastic medicine cup or oral syringe for oral chemo liquids. When throwing away these items, place them in zipper lock bag before putting in the regular trash.
- Never share your medicine with others.



Call if you have any side effects or problems

Your nurse or pharmacist should give you a handout about your oral chemo that lists side effects that may happen.



The **Red Sheet** lists problems you need to call your cancer doctor about right away. Always call your cancer doctor if you are having any problems or side effects.

Do not ignore them.

Basic guidelines for taking oral chemo (continued)

Be safe with oral chemo storage

- Store oral chemo in a safe place. Keep it away children, pets, foods, drinks and cookware. Store it in a place where it is not with other medicines.
- Keep your oral chemo in the same container or package that it came in. Do not put it in a pill box unless your doctor, nurse or pharmacist tells you to do so.
- Find out if your oral chemo needs to be stored at a certain temperature or kept away from light. If your oral chemo must be refrigerated, keep it away from food and drinks and store it in a zipper lock bag or empty food crisper drawer.
- When you are done with the packaging your oral chemo comes in, remove the label or cross out your personal information before throwing it out. Do not recycle empty pill bottles or use them to store other items.

Getting rid of unused oral chemo

Since oral chemo can kill cancer cells and healthy cells, special steps must be taken to safely get rid of any unused chemo. Do not flush oral chemo down the toilet or put it in the trash. Call your local police department and ask if they have a drug drop box program. You may also call the United Way's Help Center at 2-1-1 or visit rxdrugdropbox.org to find local drug drop box programs. If you cannot find a drug drop box program, call the local or specialty pharmacy that supplied your oral chemo.

Keep track of when you take your oral chemo

Each time you take your oral chemo, write down or enter in your phone or computer:

- when you took it
- how much you took
- any side effects you have



Bring this information to each visit with your cancer doctor.

There are many ways to keep track of when you take your oral chemo and any side effects. You can use a diary, a calendar, a medication app on your phone or one of our **Oral Chemo Tracking Forms**, which your nurse or pharmacist can provide.

Safe handling of body fluids at home while taking oral chemo

Chemo drugs destroy cancer cells, but they can also harm healthy cells. After getting chemo, there may be small amounts of chemo in body fluids like saliva, urine, vomit, stool, semen and vaginal fluids. It's best if other people aren't exposed to these small amounts of chemo. This section lists ways you and your family can safely handle body fluids after chemo.



Follow these guidelines at all times, even if you take a break from oral chemo. When you are done taking all of your oral chemo treatment, follow these guidelines for 7 days after your last dose.

Basic guidelines for handling body fluids

- Try to handle your own body fluids when you can. Other people should avoid contact with your body fluids when they can. If they must clean up body fluids, they should wear gloves. They also need to wear gloves when cleaning items that hold body fluids such as soiled clothing or linens, a bedside commode or basin for vomit.
- Don't let pregnant women or children touch body fluids or items that may contain chemo.
- You and anyone who touches your body fluids should wash their hands with soap and water afterwards.
- Wear gloves you can throw away when touching body fluids and soiled items. Don't use gloves with holes or tears. As you remove each glove, turn them inside out. Try not to touch the outside of the gloves. Wash hands with soap and water after taking off gloves.

In the bathroom

- Wash your hands well with soap and water after using the bathroom. Don't touch other items or surfaces until after you wash your hands.
- If you can, use your own bathroom. If you can't use your own bathroom, wipe the toilet seat and rim with a sanitizing wipe after each use. After cleaning, wash your hands with soap and water before touching anything. At the end of 7 days of treatment, wash the toilet and bathroom floor.
- If you have a low flow toilet, put the lid down and flush the toilet twice. This helps make sure body waste isn't left in the toilet.
- Use a toilet rather than a bedpan or urinal when you can. Wear gloves when cleaning these items, using soap and water after each use.



Safe handling of body fluids at home while taking oral chemo (continued)

If your clothes or linens become soiled with urine, stool or vomit

- Wash soiled items in a washing machine right away.
- Don't wash soiled items with other clothing. Put them through the wash cycle twice using hot water and detergent.
- If you don't have access to a washing machine, place soiled items in a sealed plastic bag until you can wash them.
- If you can, handle your own soiled items. If other people touch the soiled items, they should wear gloves and not let the items come in contact with their skin or clothing. If they do, wash them.



If you throw up

- Wear gloves if you need to clean up vomit or empty a basin. Wash the basin with soap and water after each use.

If you don't have control of your bladder or bowels

- Use throw-away plastic backed pads or diapers to absorb urine or stool. Wear gloves and change the items right away if they become soiled. Wash soiled skin gently with soap and water. Place any soiled diapers, plastic-backed pads and gloves in their own bag before putting in the regular trash.

If you have sex

Small amounts of chemo may be found in vaginal fluid or semen after chemo treatment. We do not know if these small amounts of chemo can harm a sexual partner. To help protect your partner, we recommend that you use a barrier during sex (vaginal, oral or anal).

If you have an ostomy

Caregivers need to wear gloves when they change or empty ostomy bags. Any ostomy supplies that can be thrown away, such as bags or gloves, should be put in their own bag before putting them in the regular trash.

To learn more

- Speak with your cancer doctor or nurse if you have any questions.
- Call **216-286-INFO** to speak with the Health Librarian at the Puck Learning Resource Center. At the Puck Learning Resource Center, you can get books and pamphlets about cancer and request info on topics such as:
 - Relaxation techniques
 - Local cancer support services
 - Clinical trials
 - Food safety
 - Spiritual care
 - Caregiver support and resources
 - Sexuality
 - Work concerns
 - Talking with children about cancer
 - Nutrition
 - Quitting smoking
 - Other cancer learning needs you may have



The Puck Learning Resource Center is on the lobby level of UH Seidman Cancer Center at UH Cleveland Medical Center. Services are free and available for all patients, family members and friends.



UHSeidman.org