



Pet owners may be concerned about potential risks associated with exposure to chemotherapy when their pets are receiving treatment for cancer. While specific risks to owners caring for pets with cancer are unknown and some degree of contamination of a pet's environment is expected, we do know hazards can be minimized by following the guidelines recommended below. Keep in mind, specific questions regarding your own health or that of a family member should be directed to your personal physician, as veterinarians cannot provide medical advice for humans.

If your pet is being treated with chemotherapy, it is important that you follow safety precautions to minimize exposure to these drugs.

## What happens after treatment?

After being treated with chemotherapy, your pet continues to have small amounts of chemotherapy residues in his/her system for about 72 hours to up to 7-21 days. This depends on the types of drugs used. During that time, some simple precautions can help prevent you or your family members from being exposed to the chemotherapy residues. The drug will be eliminated from your pet's body in urine or feces and drug residues may also be found in saliva or vomit. Other than contaminated body secretions, there is little risk of exposure to chemotherapy for other pets living in the same households.

## Cleaning up after your pet's eliminations:

During the first 72 hours after your pets' chemotherapy treatment, pick up any feces from outdoors. Wear disposable chemotherapy-rated gloves if cleaning up any urine, feces, vomit, or cleaning the litter box. Liquid wastes should be blotted dry with disposable towels. Dispose of the waste and gloves in the trash by placing them inside double Ziploc bags. Wash your hands after removing and disposing of the gloves.

Prevent pets from eating the stool or vomit from the pet who received chemotherapy. Chemotherapy patients should not be allowed to eliminate outdoors in areas where small children play (ex. sand box area, etc) while their urine/feces are contaminated. Also discourage your dogs from eliminating where other dogs do. It is a good idea to isolate a lower-traffic, sunlit part of the yard for his or her elimination following chemotherapy, where it is less likely to expose anyone to the waste. In the environment, these drugs will degrade over time.

Cats can be allowed to use the same litter-box. Clean litter boxes daily (preferable to use clumpable litter) and completely change frequently. Use chemotherapy-rated disposable gloves. The pan should be washed with detergent, using care to avoid high-pressure spray. Use double Ziploc bags to dispose of what is removed.

# Chemotherapy Safety



Avoid excessive licking to minimize contact with saliva after chemotherapy. If you or your child are exposed to your pet's urine, feces or vomit, wash your skin thoroughly. If your skin becomes irritated, contact your physician.

## Storing and administering oral chemotherapy at home:

Store the chemotherapy drugs out of the reach of children and in the original container (child-proof containers are recommended if there are children in the home). Do not store the medication in the kitchen or bathroom, near food or medications for humans. Check the labels to see if the chemotherapy should be kept in the refrigerator or away from light. If refrigeration is needed, make a special area away from food items and store the medication in a sealed plastic container or bag. After use, seal empty tablet containers in a plastic bag and return them to your pharmacy or hospital oncology department for disposal.

Wear chemotherapy-rated disposable gloves when handling and administering the chemotherapy drug. The chemotherapy can be administered either in a small piece of food or directly down the throat (if your pet is compliant). Wash hands after removing and disposing of the gloves in double Ziploc bags. Do not break the chemotherapy tablets, open capsules or dissolve them in water.

Oral chemotherapy is generally absorbed within 2 hours. If vomiting occurs during that time, the vomitus is considered contaminated and you should wear gloves to clean it. Depending on the timing of the vomiting, all or part of the medication will not be absorbed. Please call your veterinary oncologist for advice.

## Who should avoid handling chemotherapy, the pet, or the pet's eliminations:

- Young children
- Men and women who are attempting to conceive a child
- People taking immunosuppressive drugs (treatments for cancer or an immune disorder)
- People who are immunosuppressed or seriously ill
- Women who are breastfeeding
- Pregnant women: Women that are pregnant, or planning on becoming pregnant, should avoid contact with patients receiving chemotherapy treatment. This also includes nursing mothers. We typically recommend having another family member take care of the elimination pick up, litter box cleaning...etc.

*This information has been provided by the Veterinary Cancer Society. Please consult your veterinary oncologist, or your pet's primary care veterinarian, if you have any questions related to the information provided on this document.*