

# Preventing Infections During Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy can slow down your body from making white blood cells, which help you to fight off infections. Low white blood cell count is called neutropenia. Washing your hands with soap and water is the best way to kill germs. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and wash with soap and water as soon as you can. Washing your hands with soap and water is the best way to kill germs. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and wash with soap and water as soon as you can.

## WHAT TO DO:

- Wear a mask as recommended by your doctor.
- If you have an IV catheter device, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before and after caring for your catheter, port or other access device. Follow directions given by the health care team to change dressing and caps, and to flush the catheter.
- Bathe daily, paying special attention to areas under the arm, around genitals and under skinfolds which hold bacteria.
- Prevent injury to skin, such as tears, cuts or friction.
- Try to stay away from large crowds if you can.
- Minimize exposure to visitors, school-age children or children in day care.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables very well.
- Check expiration dates on food; throw away dented cans.
- Keep your kitchen and bathroom regularly sanitized.
- Make sure you refrigerate foods right away (groceries and leftovers).
- Avoid getting foods and drinks (e.g., soda, milkshakes) from self-serve/fast-food restaurants or public places.
- Be aware of mold, moisture buildup in your walls, etc. Address as appropriate.

## HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS

Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, or use hand sanitizers:

- After using the bathroom
- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

### DO NOT

Use hand sanitizer if your hands are visibly dirty or greasy — for example, after gardening, playing outdoors, fishing or camping.



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