



Chemotherapy at Home (Oral)



Oral chemotherapy has been prescribed for you or a family member to take at home. The information in this pamphlet will help you safely take this medicine.



Pills & Capsules

The safest way to take this medicine is to swallow it whole without crushing, splitting the pill or opening the capsule. Avoid touching the medicine with your hands by putting the pill into a medicine cup. A medicine cup will be given to you by the London Regional Cancer Program (LRCP) Pharmacy. If the medicine is touched, wash your hands very well with soap and warm water.

It is very important to keep all chemotherapy medicine out of the reach of children!

Splitting Pills

If you must split a pill, please follow these guidelines. You should always use a counter or tabletop in an area that is quiet and clean. There should be no fans, open windows, or airflow to reduce the risk of powder blowing around. This area should not be where food is present.

1. Place a piece of wax paper on the flat surface followed by a piece of paper towel to help trap powder from the pill.
2. Wash your hands well with soap and water. Dry hands.
3. Put on two (2) pairs of disposable gloves (double glove).
4. Count the number of pills you will need for the next month.

5. Split the pills by hand if they are scored. Use a pill cutter if they are unscored.



Unscored



Scored

6. Roll up the wax paper and paper towel when you are finished. Put them into a disposable plastic bag with the gloves you are wearing.
7. Clean the counter or tabletop and carefully well with soap and water using paper towel or disposable towels (e.g., J-Cloth®).
8. Place paper or disposable towels into the same garbage bag as the wax paper and gloves.
9. Double bag before putting it in with your regular garbage. Keep out of reach of children and pets.



Using Pill Cutters:

If pills are not scored, a pill cutter should be used. Most pharmacies sell pill cutters. The pill cutter you buy should **only** be used for chemotherapy drugs. It needs to be carefully washed **before** and **after** each use.

Liquid & Suspension

If you cannot swallow pills and capsules, the next best option is to have the LRCP Pharmacy prepare a liquid form of the medicine you are taking.

You will need to reduce the risk of touching the medicine. Use these guidelines to keep you safe from exposure.

1. Follow Steps 1, 2 and 3 for “Splitting Pills”. Make certain the flat surface you are using is away from the kitchen and where people eat.
2. Draw up the amount needed for your dose using an oral syringe. The pharmacist will give you an oral syringe and will tell you the amount you need to take. Always use the plastic bottle adaptor that is given with the syringe. It will reduce the risk of spills and drips.

3. Replace the cap after taking the dose. Wash the syringe carefully with warm water and make sure it is very clean. Put the syringe into a sealable bag (e.g., Ziploc®) for the next dose.
4. Wash the counter or tabletop carefully with soap and water.
5. Put paper towels, gloves, etc. into the garbage as directed in Steps 8 and 9 of “Splitting Pills”.

Cleaning up Spills

If you spill chemotherapy, wear gloves and use paper towels to wipe up the liquid. Clean the area very carefully with soap and water. Double bag all supplies you used for cleaning the area (i.e., paper towels, gloves, etc.) and place into regular garbage. Keep away from children and pets.

Crushing Pills & Opening Capsules

Crushing pills and opening capsules at home **should not be done** unless it is the only option left. You will need to wear a mask, which can be purchased at most hardware stores or pharmacies. This may reduce the amount of powder that is inhaled. Before crushing pills and opening capsules, please talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

1. Follow Steps 1, 2 and 3 for “Splitting Pills”. Make certain the flat surface you are using is away from the kitchen and where people eat.
2. If crushing, place the pill into two sealable plastic bags and seal them.
3. Use the back of a spoon to gently crush the pills. Do not make a hole or break the bags.
4. Pour the powder from the bag or the capsule into a medication cup.
5. Mix the powder with a small amount of food or liquid as suggested by the doctor, nurse or pharmacist.
6. Wash the counter or tabletop carefully with soap and water.
7. Put the paper towels, gloves, etc. into the garbage as directed in Steps 8 and 9 of “Splitting Pills”.