

Preventing Infections

Infection cannot be completely prevented. However, there are things you can do to decrease the risk of infection. You are most susceptible to getting an infection about seven to ten days after your chemotherapy infusion if your white blood cells are affected. Most infections come from result from your body's inability to fight off normal bacteria present in your mouth, intestines and genital tract. Sometimes, the cause of an infection may not be known. Bacterial infections do not commonly result from being in a crowded place, however, viral infections such as colds and flu are common and are transmitted easily from other people, usually by hand to hand contact.

When to call your doctor:

- Fever of 100.5° or greater
- Shaking chills
- Diarrhea with a fever
- Burning or stinging when urinating
- A new cough with yellow or green sputum production

To help to decrease your risk of getting an infection:

- **WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN.** The single most important thing you can do to protect yourself is for you, family, and friends is for you and they to wash hands frequently. Proper hand washing may eliminate nearly half of all cases of food borne illness and significantly reduce the spread of the common cold and flu. Use soap and warm water, lather well, and rub all portions of the hand thoroughly for 10 seconds. Do not use antibacterial soap because it increases bacteria resistance to cleansers and contributes to environmental toxicity.
- Insist on frequent, thorough hand washing for every member of the family:
 - After using the toilet
 - After handshaking
 - After changing a diaper
 - Before eating or preparing food to eat
 - After contact with someone who is very young or old
 - When coming from outdoors
- Hand sanitizers may be used instead of hand washing unless your hands are visibly soiled or if your skin is dry and cracked.
- In general, it is fine to go to public places. Avoid if possible tightly crowded places during the height of the cold/flu season. Generally a mask will not offer much protection from viruses, so it's better to avoid close contact with people coughing and sneezing. If your doctor tells you that your white blood cell count is extremely low you should avoid crowds until it his higher.
- Stay away from people who have illness you can catch, such as a cold or flu.
- Keep your body clean by showering or bathing regularly. Do not share towels.

Food Safety:

- Wash hands, utensils, and surfaces with hot soapy water before food preparation, especially after preparing meat. Thoroughly wash all fruits and vegetables. Cook food well. Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a boil when reheating. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours. Thaw food in the refrigerator not at room temperature,