Taking Oral Anti-Cancer Medications at Home

Some anti-cancer medications can be taken at home. Oral medications are given by mouth. They may be in the form of a pill, capsule, tablet, or liquid. Examples of oral medications that can be taken at home are chemotherapy, biotherapy, or hormone therapy. If oral medications are part of your treatment plan it is important to remember to follow all safety precautions. This article will provide tips to keep you, your caregiver, and your family safe.

- Wash your hands before and after taking your medication.
- Take your medication per the instructions given by your provider. Not following these instructions can make the treatment less effective.
- Take your medication at the same time every day.
- Always double and triple-check the dose before taking it. You may need to take more than one pill or combine pills of different strengths to make the dose you need.
- Be sure you understand the schedule you should follow. Some oral anti-cancer medications are taken in "cycles", with some days off from treatment during each cycle.
- Follow any instructions provided about whether to take with food or on an empty stomach.
- If a caregiver prepares your dose for you, they should avoid touching the pills. They should either wear gloves or pour the pills directly from their container into the cap or a small cup to hand to you. They should wash their hands before and after. Pregnant or nursing women should not prepare the dose for you.
- Most medications need to be swallowed whole. Do not chew, break, or open pills/capsules/tablets. If you are unable to swallow it, talk to your care team about other ways you can take the medication. If your medication can be crushed, opened, or dissolved in a liquid, your pharmacist will be able to give your further instruction.
- Store your medication in the original, labeled container at room temperature and in a dry location (unless otherwise directed by your provider or pharmacist). If you use a pill box for oral chemotherapy do not put other pills in that box. Label each box.
- Keep containers out of reach of children and pets.
- If you vomit after taking the dose, call your care team for instructions.
- If you miss a dose, follow the instructions from your care team. Do not take a double dose unless you are told to do so.
- Ask your oncology team where to return any unused medication for disposal. Avoid putting it in the trash, toilet, or sink.
- Read Home Safety for Patients Receiving Chemotherapy for information about safety while receiving chemotherapy.

Creating a medication calendar can help you keep track of your medications. Including when you should take them, the start date, the stop date, and any special instructions you need to remember. Below is an example of a medication calendar.

**Specific Instructions for My Treatment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication Name &amp; Dose</th>
<th>When to Take/Special Instructions</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
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