



## The Johns Hopkins Hospital Patient Information

Original Date  
9/05  
Oncology  
Revised/ Reviewed  
3/15

### Care at Home for the Immunocompromised Patient



What can I do to prevent infection?

- Hand washing is the **best way** to prevent infection.
- Carry hand sanitizer with you at all times.
- Wash with soap and water or hand sanitizer
  - before and after you use the bathroom
  - before and after preparing or eating food
  - after touching pets or animals
  - after contact with someone who has an infection such as a cold or the flu
  - after touching surfaces in public areas (such as elevator buttons, handrails and gas pumps)

Do I need to wear a mask?

- Wear an N95 respirator mask when you travel to and from the hospital, when you are in the hospital, within two football fields of construction or digging, and in any public place.
- Close all car windows and turn on the re-circulate button of your ventilation system.
- Avoid crowds if possible. An area is crowded if you are within an arm's length of other people.
- Avoid closed spaces if possible.

Can I have visitors?

- Tell friends and family who are sick not to visit. It may be a good idea to have visitors call you first.

Are there any precautions I should follow about my medicine?

- Do not take aspirin or aspirin-like products (such as Advil™, Motrin™ or Excedrin™) unless told by your doctor.
- You should wear a medical alert bracelet that identifies you as a cancer patient or bone marrow transplant patient at risk for bleeding or infection.
- **Keep a current medication list with you at all times.**
- Do not take any herbal products.
- Avoid grapefruit juice, which interacts with many medications.



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<p>Are there any precautions I should follow about my personal care?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not schedule any dental procedures (including cleaning and minor surgery) without your oncologist's permission.</li> <li>• Do not use tampons or douche.</li> <li>• Do not use enemas or suppositories</li> <li>• Do not apply artificial fingernails, overlays or nail tips.</li> <li>• Do not have manicures or pedicures.</li> <li>• Gently file and care for cuticles.</li> <li>• Do not share personal items, such as nail polish, nail file or makeup, with anyone.</li> <li>• Only use electric razors to shave.</li> </ul>
<p>Do I need to make any changes in my sex life?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check with your oncologist before having intercourse if your platelets or white blood cells are low.</li> <li>• Clean your genital area very well.</li> <li>• Urinate after intercourse to reduce bladder infections.</li> <li>• Male patients and male partners of patients should use condoms to prevent infection and chemotherapy exposure.</li> <li>• Female patients should use lubrication to minimize vaginal irritation.</li> <li>• Avoid sexual practices in which oral exposure to feces may occur.</li> </ul>
<p>Can I still go swimming?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not swim in water that may be contaminated, such as oceans, ponds, lakes, rivers and public pools.</li> <li>• Do not sit in hot tubs or whirlpools.</li> <li>• If you have a catheter or tube, do not swim or let it go under the water.</li> </ul>
<p>How can I make sure my food and water are safe to eat and drink?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash hands with warm soapy water before and after preparing food and before eating.</li> <li>• Clean the areas where you prepare food. Use a separate cutting board for raw meat.</li> <li>• Throw out all prepared foods after 72 hours in the refrigerator that have been opened, used or are left over.</li> <li>• Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours of cooking time in small shallow containers. Throw leftovers away that have been at room temperature more than 2 hours.</li> <li>• Meat, fish and shellfish should be cooked well done.</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eggs and foods containing eggs must be fully cooked.</li> <li>• Always check the “sell by” and “use by” dates. Do not buy or use products that are out of date.</li> <li>• Avoid salad bars, delicatessens, and buffets.</li> <li>• Raw fruits and vegetables should be washed and or peeled.</li> <li>• Use only <b>pasteurized</b> dairy, eggs, juice, honey and beer products.</li> <li>• Never eat anything that has mold on it.</li> <li>• Do not use herbal supplements.</li> <li>• Patients with blood cancers should not use probiotics.</li> <li>• Patients with other types of cancer should check with their doctor before using probiotics.</li> <li>• Do not drink well water unless tested yearly and found to be safe.</li> </ul>
Is it okay to garden?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not work in the garden or dig in soil or mulch</li> </ul>
Can I still take care of my pets?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have a cat or dog, try to spend little time in contact with it and wash your hands immediately afterward.</li> <li>• You <b>should not</b> have any contact with birds, fish, rodents, reptiles or farm animals.</li> <li>• If your pet develops diarrhea, remove it from your living area until a veterinarian has seen it.</li> <li>• You may not clean up pet urine or feces, including litter boxes, birdcages or aquariums.</li> <li>• Avoid exposure to any cat which is not declawed.</li> </ul>
Can I still smoke?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not smoke or use tobacco products.</li> <li>• Ask your doctor about nicotine replacement therapies.</li> <li>• No one should smoke in your house.</li> </ul>
Can I travel?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check with your doctor about traveling abroad or using public transportation.</li> </ul>



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What should I  
call my doctor  
or nurse  
about?

You should call your doctor or nurse **right away** if you have:

- a fever greater than 100.5°
- chills or shaking
- soreness, swelling, redness or pus from a wound, central line or other IV
- new cough
- sinus pain or drainage
- white patches in the mouth
- frequency, urgency or burning when urinating
- sore throat
- new, hard lumps
- exposure to an infectious disease, contaminated food or water, or pets mentioned previously.