

How to Prevent Infections

There are different kinds of infections that can make your child sick while going through cancer treatment. Your child could be at risk to get bacterial, viral or fungal infections. The below instructions will help prevent your child from getting sick. However, sometimes your child will still get an infection even if you did everything possible to protect him/her. This is no one's fault and is a known risk of treating cancer.

How to prevent infections while in the hospital and at home

- **HAND WASHING!** Every person that comes into your child's room **MUST** wash his/her hands with soap and water or use the waterless antibacterial gel if your hands do not have dirt that you can see on them. Do not be afraid to stop those who don't and remind them! Our healthcare personnel expect to be reminded.
- Some infections can be prevented with vaccines. These can spread from person to person and can be life threatening in patients with cancer. To keep your child safe it is very important that all family members and close contacts make sure all of their vaccines are up to date. Also, your child, all family members and all close contacts should get their flu shot (influenza vaccine) every year.
- Limit the number of visitors that come to see your child. Do not let visitors, even family, come see your child if they are sick with fever, cough, runny nose, diarrhea, etc. They need to recover before coming to visit. If someone in your house becomes sick, try to separate the sick family member from others as much as possible.
- Keep your child's room clean and free of clutter. Do not put dirty diapers on the bed or floor. Keep your home as dust free as possible by vacuuming at least once a week and dusting with a wet cloth. Please do not use a dry or feather duster as these spread dust in the air. Your child should be in a different room during cleaning with the door closed. If you are planning to purchase a new vacuum cleaner, those with HEPA filters are preferred.
- No plants in dirt should be in his/her room. Dirt can have mold and fungal spores that he/she could breathe in causing a fungal infection. Do not let your child play in dirt, play outside near construction sites, or do yard work.
- No fresh flowers in water as the water can grow bacteria that could infect your child if exposed.
- When your child leaves the hospital room to go home, he/she must wear a special blue mask (N95) until you get into the car. When you return to the hospital or outpatient clinic, you must put the special blue mask (N95) on before you get out of the car and keep it on until you are in the clinic or in your hospital room. This is to prevent your child from breathing dangerous dust around construction areas whether outside or in the hospital.
- During your child's hospital stay, he/she must wear the special N95 mask whenever he/she leaves the oncology floor and for the duration of stay in areas of the hospital that are not HEPA-filtered. Your nurse will advise you when it is safe to remove the N95 mask.
- Do not start any construction on your home during treatment. If he/she has to go near or drive by a construction site, he/she should wear a special blue mask (N95).



- If you think there is mold in your home, please try to remove it and clean afterwards before your child returns home.
- Ask the doctor or nurse, what is his/her ANC? This will tell you if their immune system is weak or strong. **An ANC of less than 500 means the immune system is very weak.** AVOID crowds of people especially when your child's ANC is less than 500. **Your child will be at the greatest risk of infection when the ANC is \leq 100.**
- Most healthy pets may stay in your home while your child is getting cancer treatment. Your child should wash his/her hands after touching the animal. Do not allow your child to clean kitty litter boxes, stool or urine from pets or clean cages. Your child should NOT touch birds, turtles, snakes, lizards or other reptiles and it is optimal not to have these types of pets in the home during your child's most vulnerable period of treatment. These animals carry dangerous bacteria. Fish tanks must be covered and do not allow your child to touch the fish tank water.
- Artificial nails can grow fungus underneath. In the hospital and clinic, we do not allow healthcare personnel who have contact with patients to wear artificial nails or to have long nails. We discourage caregivers or patients from having artificial nails. Keep natural nails clean and trimmed. Discourage your child from biting his/her nails.
- Do not allow your child to share drinks, food, utensils, towels or toothbrushes with others. Guidelines for cooking:
 - Wash all food preparation surfaces (hands, knives, cutting boards) before and after preparing food, using an antimicrobial soap product.
 - Scrub rough surfaces prior to cutting (skin of melons).
 - Thaw meat in the refrigerator, not on the counter
 - Wash well (or avoid) all raw fruits and vegetables
 - Thoroughly cook meat, poultry, eggs and shellfish
 - Use only pasteurized milk, cheese, ciders and juices – organic and natural may not be pasteurized, so please carefully check food labels
- Keep toys, electronics or items your child handles frequently clean.
- Your child may play outside (in hot or cold weather) even when the ANC is below 500, but avoid large crowds and areas such as construction sites where dust and mold are in the air. Remember to wear sunscreen during outdoor activities.
- For most patients with a port, swimming is allowed. Ask your medical team if your child can swim in a swimming pool, lake or in the ocean. There may be times his/her immune system is especially weak and swimming may not be allowed. For patients with external lines, swimming is not allowed as it is important not to get those lines wet or go under water.

