

# Infection Prevention and You



## Prepare, prevent, and protect

### Three steps toward preventing infections during cancer treatment

More than one million patients receive treatment for cancer in an outpatient oncology clinic every year. One of the most dangerous side effects of receiving chemotherapy is a reduction in the number of infection-fighting white blood cells in the body. Infections are a major cause of hospitalization and death among cancer patients receiving chemotherapy.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s interactive website titled "3 Steps Toward Preventing Infections During Cancer Treatment" features tools to help cancer patients, caregivers, and healthcare workers prevent infections. This program provides information, helpful tips, and tools to reduce the risk of life-threatening infections during chemotherapy treatment.

Topics include:

- Signs and symptoms of infection
- Understanding the effects of a low white blood cell count
- Understanding your risk for infection during chemotherapy
- Basic hygiene practices
- Caring for children with cancer
- Caring for your catheter
- Caring for your pet
- Food and kitchen safety
- Friends, family, and public places
- Gardening and housekeeping
- Medication
- Vaccinations and the flu

The website also features a questionnaire to help cancer patients understand their risk of developing a low white blood cell count (neutropenia) that can occur during chemotherapy and can lead to infections. By answering a few questions about risk factors, cancer patients and their caregivers can receive information about how they can prepare, prevent, and protect themselves from getting an infection during chemotherapy treatment:

1. **Prepare:** Watch out for a fever during chemotherapy.
2. **Prevent:** Clean your hands.
3. **Protect:** Know the signs and symptoms of an infection and what to do if you develop these signs or symptoms.

#### Additional resources

CDC – 3 Steps Toward Preventing Infections During Cancer Treatment <http://www.preventcancerinfections.org/>

CDC – Clinical education material <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/preventinfections>

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