

WHAT TO KNOW IF YOU ARE UNDERGOING CHEMOTHERAPY AND HAVE A PET

THE COMMON QUESTIONS

Your cancer team often hears questions about the potential impact of chemotherapy on pets, and this fact sheet includes some of the most common questions that arise.



CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENT

When you are undergoing chemotherapy, you can generally empty your cat's litterbox. Speak with your health care team to make sure they think it is safe for you to do so.

Can I harm my pet as a result of my chemotherapy? When cancer patients receive chemotherapy, they may see their health care team taking great care to avoid having the chemotherapy come into direct contact with their own skin. There is a common misconception that after treatment a cancer patient may harm their pets if the patient comes into contact with them. Fortunately, this is not the case.

Once chemotherapy is given to a patient and it circulates through the body, a patient cannot pass the chemotherapy through their hands when they pet their cat or dog. There is also no danger that the patient's breath can harm their pet.

If you have any questions about when you should be avoiding contact with your pets as a result of your chemotherapy - or other cancer treatments - the general rule is that you should ask your health care team.

Should I take any special precautions related to my chemotherapy? Always keep your chemotherapy (and any other medications you are taking) out of reach of your pet, whose natural tendency is to chew everything in sight! Chemotherapy and other drugs can be extremely harmful and if your pet ingests them, call your veterinarian immediately. As well, ibuprofen can be particularly harmful and has even been known to cause kidney failure if animals ingest it in large quantities.



One particular area that chemotherapy patients need to be careful about is IV tubing. If you are using IV tubing and have a pet, it is crucial that you take great care to ensure that your pet does not come into contact with the tubing. Dogs and cats may see it as a toy to play with and they have even been known to chew on the tubing. Be careful to prevent a situation where your pet could chew through the tubing to the chemotherapy inside.

CANCER TREATMENTS

There are so many new treatments for cancer that you need to be sure to ask your health care team for the most up-to-date information about how your treatment may impact your pet.

Some final thoughts. Is it safe to have a pet if you are a cancer patient receiving chemotherapy? Yes, as long as you take the correct precautions. Talk to your health care provider team and ask them any questions you may have. (See also CancerCare's "Suggested Questions to Ask Your Health Care Provider Team"). Except in certain circumstances, you should be able to maintain that wonderful bond between you and your beloved pet.

The CancerCare® Pet Assistance and Wellness (PAW) Program

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. The financial assistance component of the CancerCare PAW Program has helped over 1,300 clients keep their pets in their homes.

This fact sheet is for people living with cancer and caring for their pets and it includes important information for them and their loved ones, as well as health care professionals and veterinarians.

For additional information please visit www.cancercare.org/paw or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

Facebook: [facebook.com/CancerCare](https://www.facebook.com/CancerCare)

Instagram: @CancerCarePAW

Twitter: @CancerCare

Funding for this fact sheet is made possible by a generous grant from Amie's Place Foundation, which funds organizations that create no-fee programs dedicated to keeping families and pets together safely.



CANCERcare®

National Office • 275 Seventh Avenue • New York, NY 10001

© 2022 CancerCare®