

Cancer: Preventing infections during treatment

Chemotherapy and targeted therapy



Chemotherapy and targeted therapy make you more vulnerable to infections. This is one of their side effects. This fact sheet tells you what precautions to take and the signs of infection to watch for.

Why do I need to be more careful about infections during my treatment?

Chemotherapy and targeted therapy affect the way your body usually works. Under normal circumstances, your body is quite good at fighting infections. But while you're in treatment, it's much less able to cope. Your risk of catching a cold, the flu, or other contagious diseases is higher.



Pay special attention to infections during all the time you're in treatment and **up to one month afterward**.

How can I protect myself from infections?

- > Wash your hands often with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer, especially before eating and after using the toilet.



- > Ask everyone around you to wash their hands often, too.
- > Avoid places where there are lots of people, such as public transportation, supermarkets, and shopping malls.
- > Don't go to public swimming pools.
- > Avoid all contact with people who have a cold, the flu, or any other contagious disease.
- > If you're taking care of a **child who has a cold or the flu**, wear a mask and wash your hands before and after touching the child.
- > Don't bathe animals and don't touch their litter or excrement. Wash your hands after touching an animal.
- > If you get a cut, scratch, or burn, wash it with warm water and soap. If possible, apply a bandage.
- > Wear gloves and a mask when working in the garden.



Before making a dentist appointment or getting a vaccination, check with your doctor, who will tell you when is the best time for it.

What is the main sign of infection I should watch out for?

Fever. If you're running a high temperature, you may have an infection.



Never take aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol), or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, etc.), as these drugs can hide a fever.

How do I check my temperature?

Fever is often the first sign of infection. That's why it's important to take your temperature **as soon as you're not feeling well**, such as when you're more tired than usual.

You can buy a thermometer at the pharmacy. Make sure you get one that's meant for taking your temperature orally (that is, by mouth). If necessary, ask the pharmacist to show you how to use it.

Call a CHUM nurse if:

- your oral temperature is over 38°C (100.4°F) for over an hour
- or your oral temperature is over 38.3°C (100.9°F)

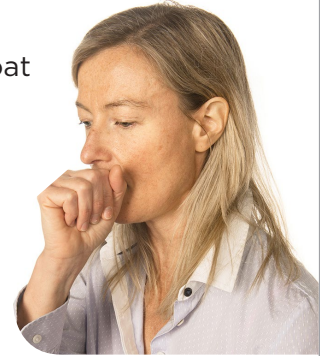
This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. When calling, be sure to have your health insurance card on hand.

> **514 890-8086**

What other signs of infection should I watch out for?

It's important to speak to a nurse on your care team if you notice any of the following signs:

- shivering
- a serious cough or sore throat
- green or yellow mucus
- pain when you urinate
- diarrhea
- skin that becomes red, swollen, or painful
- unusual sweating



The oncology clinic is open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. **Outside opening hours you can:**

- > call Info-Santé at **8-1-1**
- > or go to the emergency room

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

Talk with a member of your care team.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our website chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal chumontreal.qc.ca