

How To Take Cancer Treatments By Mouth

You have been prescribed a cancer treatment that you will take by mouth and swallow. Your healthcare team may refer to these medicines as oral cancer treatment. These treatments taken by mouth include hormonal therapy, targeted therapy, and chemotherapy. These medicines may be in the form of a pill, capsule, tablet or liquid.

Because you will be taking this medicine at home, you play a very important role in your treatment. Not taking your medicine the right way can affect how well it works. You may be asked to take this medicine over a long period of time. As your body starts to respond to the medicine, you may start to feel better. **It is very important for you to keep taking your medicine until your healthcare team tells you to stop.**

You are able to get your prescriptions filled at most retail or mail order pharmacies. Let your healthcare team know if you are having trouble getting your medicine(s).

Do's and Don'ts of Taking Oral Cancer Medicine

Oral cancer medicines need to be handled safely. It is important to follow the information below to keep you, your caregiver, and family safe.

- Wash your hands before and after handling the medicine.
- Take the correct amount of your medicine at the times directed by your healthcare team.
- You may need to take more than one pill or combine pills that are different strengths. Double and triple check the dose before taking it.
- **Do not** touch the medicine with your bare hands. Pour the correct dose directly from its container into the cap or a cup. Then pour directly into your mouth. You can also wear disposable gloves which can be bought at any drug store.
- Call your healthcare team if you miss a dose. **Do not** take a double dose unless you are told to do so.
- **Do not** skip a dose if you are not feeling well. Call your healthcare team for help about your symptoms.
- Swallow your medicine whole. **Do not** chew, break or open the capsules, tablets, or pills. If you are unable to swallow the medicine, talk to your healthcare team about other ways it can be taken.
- You may need to take your medicine with food or on an empty stomach. Take your medicine as you were told by your healthcare team.
- If you vomit after taking the medicine, call your healthcare team.
- If you have sign and symptoms of an infection or you are generally not feeling well, ask your healthcare team for further instructions.
- If you are pregnant, nursing, or thinking about getting pregnant, you should not handle this medicine (unless otherwise directed by your healthcare team).
- Return any unused medicine to the Rutgers Cancer Institute for disposal. **Do not** flush down the toilet or throw in the trash.
- These medicines can cause side effects. These side effects should be reported to your healthcare team.

Storage of Your Oral Cancer Medicine

- Ask your healthcare team how to store your medicine.
- These medicines should be stored in the container they came in. Most of them should be stored at room temperature, away from heat, moisture, and direct sunlight. They should not be placed on a windowsill, near a sink, in a bathroom, or in a car.
- Some of these medicines may need to be in a refrigerator. Store the medicine in a leak proof, zip-lock bag away from food, in a crisper bin with no other items but the medicine, or on the lowest shelf of your refrigerator. Do not place medicine in the freezer.
- Keep medicines out of reach of children and pets.

Tips for Setting a Schedule and Sticking To It

- Work with your healthcare team to find the best time of day to take your medicine so that it is most effective and works with your schedule.
- Ask your healthcare team whether or not you should take your medicine with food. You may need to change your meal times.
- Use a pill box that lists the days of the week so you are able to keep track.
- Create a calendar or schedule to help you remember to take your medicine. If you would like, ask your healthcare team to print a calendar for you.
- Make this part of your daily routine by taking it at the same time every day.
- Set an alarm on your clock, computer, watch, or cell phone.
 - There may be a free app on your phone that you can use to track your medicine.
 - You can find some apps on the Resource and Learning Center website at www.cinj.org/rhc.
- Ask people close to you to remind you to take your medicine.
- Call your healthcare team with questions at 732-235-2465.

If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.