This fact sheet is a guide for patients and carers to safely manage cytotoxic drugs and related waste at home. Cytotoxic drugs are often referred to as chemotherapy or anti-neoplastic drugs.

- Cytotoxic drugs are used mainly to treat cancer and can be harmful to normal cells. These drugs are processed through the body and may be present in urine, faeces, vomit and fluid drained from body cavities for up to seven days after treatment.

- People caring for patients receiving cytotoxic drugs must take precautions to reduce their exposure during chemotherapy administration and for seven days following treatment.

- If possible, the person receiving the chemotherapy should do as much personal hygiene care as they can. Frequent hand washing is very important for the patient and their carers. Hands should also be washed after glove removal.

**Oral chemotherapy**

- Oral chemotherapy tablets should be kept out of the reach of children and pets
- Swallow the tablets or capsules whole (never open capsules, or crush, chew or bite tablets)
- Do not touch your chemotherapy tablets. Place them into a disposable medication cup
- Ensure your carer does not handle your chemotherapy tablets or capsules. Gloves should be worn if you or your carer need to touch the tablets or capsules
- Dispose of gloves and medication cup as per household garbage
- Wash hands after administering chemotherapy.

**Body waste**

- All body waste can be safely disposed of in most household toilets, using a full flush
- It is safe to use a septic tank
- If you have a composting or eco-friendly toilet system it is recommended that the home owner talk to the supplier and/or manufacturer and seek advice about the effects of cytotoxic drugs on their particular system
- Men should be seated when urinating to avoid splashes
- Patients who have received or are receiving cytotoxic drugs should close the lid of the toilet before flushing.
Body fluid spills
- Wear gloves
- Wipe up spill with toilet paper and put into toilet
- If using paper towel this may be placed in household garbage following the household garbage guidelines below
- Clean area with water and detergent and rinse well
- Put gloves into household garbage (as per household garbage guidelines below)
- Wash hands well.

Household garbage
Items such as medicine bottles, ointment tubes, disposable gloves, paper towels (used to clean up spills), ostomy bags, wound dressings and incontinence pads can be placed in the household garbage bin using the following guidelines:
- Place above items/rubbish into a plastic bag then place into larger, stronger plastic bag and again seal, before placing into household garbage.

People who need to know you are receiving cytotoxic chemotherapy
- You only need to tell people who are likely to come into contact with your cytotoxic drugs or body fluids
- This may include visiting nurses, doctors, hospital and nursing home staff, dentists, friends and family.

Washing contaminated linen
- Any linen or clothing that is contaminated with body waste during this time should be laundered immediately and separately from other washing
- If washing cannot be done immediately, the clothing may be stored for short periods of time in a sealed plastic bag
- Always wear gloves when handling cytotoxic contaminated linen, after use, dispose of gloves as per household garbage guideline
- Wearing gloves put linen/clothes into the washing machine, wash at maximum running cycle for one full cycle
- After washing linen/clothes, air dry and return to general use.

Patient going home with intravenous cytotoxic chemotherapy running
- You will be provided with a spill kit to take home and information on how to manage a spill of cytotoxic chemotherapy at home
- Please take time to look at the contents of the spill kit and to read the instructions.

Sexual practices
- If you are sexually active, it is recommended that you or your partner use a barrier method (e.g. condom) during sex to protect your partner from being exposed to cytotoxic drugs
- Conceiving a child should be avoided during treatment with cytotoxic drugs. This is due to possible side effects cytotoxic drugs may have on normal cell production
- Contraception should be discussed with your doctor or nurse.

Further advice and information:
Please tell nursing staff if you are a resident in a community care facility/nursing home/hostel.
If you have any further questions or queries please discuss with your treating doctors or nurses.

- The Cancer Care Services team at Nambour General Hospital can be contacted on: 5470 6788 or 5470 6535 Monday to Friday 7.30am to 5.00pm
- Out of hours Nambour ph: 5470 6600 and ask to speak to the after hours nurse manager.
- The Cancer Care Services team at Gympie Hospital can be contacted on 5489 8481 Monday to Friday 8.00am to 3.30pm.
- Out of hours Gympie: 5489 8444 and ask to speak to the after hours nurse manager.