



## Patient Education Sheet

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# How Can I Manage Infection?

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Many treatments for cancer, including chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and surgery, can put you at risk for infection. Infection can cause fevers, and treatment can be expensive.

Here are tips and techniques that you can discuss with your healthcare provider to relieve infection.

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## Most Helpful

- **Hand hygiene (for patients and caregivers):** Wash your hands often and thoroughly dry them. Some bacteria are not killed by alcohol, so use soap and water, particularly if you have a bacterial infection. Do not wear artificial fingernails.
- **Colony-stimulating factors (CSFs):** These medications are recommended to treat infection if you are receiving chemotherapy and have a 20% or higher risk for febrile neutropenia.
- **Vaccines:** Influenza and bacterial pneumonia can cause serious infection, so yearly vaccines are recommended.
- **Antimicrobial drugs:** These drugs help prevent mouth infections.

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## Likely to Be Helpful

- **Private rooms:** Your healthcare provider may place you in your own room to protect you from catching other people's germs and illnesses.
- **Oxygen and respiratory care:** Humidifiers, breathing masks, and other devices may be used so you can breathe easily. Your healthcare provider will give you information on cleaning and maintaining humidifiers and other devices.
- **Breathing masks and air filters:** If you have neutropenia and have been placed in a protective room, your healthcare provider may recommend that you wear a mask when you leave the protected area.
- **Flowers and plants:** Avoid fresh or dried flowers and plants to prevent *Aspergillus* infection. Your caregivers should wear gloves while handling plants and wash their hands after taking off the gloves. Ask your caregivers to change vase water every two days outside of your room and to disinfect the vases.
- **Ice handling:** Do not handle ice by hand, and wash your hands after you obtain the ice.
- **Animal encounters:** Avoid contact with saliva, urine, and feces from animals.

