

HEALTH TIP SHEET

GARDENING AND HOUSEKEEPING



Gardening

During your nadir, the period of time beginning 7–12 days after you finish each chemotherapy dose—and possibly lasting up to one week—is when you may be at the greatest risk for infection. During this time you should consider avoiding gardening. At other times during your cancer treatment, gardening is a good way to get outside for some fresh air. Many people find gardening relaxing and enjoyable.

Here are a few things you should consider when gardening:

- Wearing gardening gloves can protect your hands and help to avoid cuts and scrapes. Be especially careful around roses or other plants with sharp thorns. Your skin is your first defense against infection, and any breaks in the skin create an opportunity for germs to enter your body.
- Wearing gardening gloves also protects your hands from direct contact with soil, which can contain bacteria and mold. After gardening, be sure to wash your hands with soap and water.

What is Nadir?

Chemotherapy treatment will usually involve a number of chemotherapy doses (sometimes called cycles). The period of time beginning 7–12 days after you finish each chemotherapy dose—and possibly lasting up to one week—is when you have the fewest white blood cells in your body. Because of this, it will be extra hard for your body to fight off germs during this time.

This period of time is sometimes referred to as nadir, which means “lowest point”. For example, if you have chemotherapy on August 7, you are at highest risk of picking up an infection between August 14 and August 19. This period varies slightly depending upon the chemotherapy drug, or combination of drugs, used.

What Can You Do During Your Nadir?

- Find out from your doctor and/or nurse exactly when your white blood cell count will be at its lowest.
- Be extra careful during this time.
- Try to remember to take your temperature every evening, and call your doctor if you have a temperature of 100.4°F or higher for more than 1 hour, or a one-time temperature of 101°F or higher.

Housekeeping

Keeping up with your household chores is always a challenge. It can be even harder when you are not feeling well. If possible, don't do household chores if you don't feel well. It is better to rest if you are tired or not feeling well, as this will help your body recover from chemotherapy. If you do want to do housekeeping, there are a couple of easy tips you can follow to keep your house clean and lower your chance of picking up germs

Disinfecting

Try and keep all your household surfaces clean. You can use disinfectants, such as sprays and wipes, to kill germs on the following places:

- Kitchen counter tops and floors, especially before and after food preparation
- Refrigerator door handles
- Telephones
- Door knobs and handles
- Bathroom counter tops and floors

If you are receiving chemotherapy, you may be at risk for getting an infection. Take the right steps toward preventing infections during cancer treatment by visiting www.PreventCancerInfections.org



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