



SAFE HANDLING Q&A

TOILET FLUSHING

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No currently published research has established the effectiveness of double flushing for reducing HD contamination; however, several organizations recommend it (American Cancer Society, 2018; Oncolink, 2018). Some hospital toilets use powerful, high-pressure flushing mechanisms, and many do not have a lid, which can potentially result in aerosolization during flushing. Other facilities require the toilet to be covered with a plastic-backed absorbent pad while flushing. This may protect healthcare workers from splashing and minimize environmental contamination with HDs, but it also requires a system for proper disposal of the HD-contaminated pad, which should not be thrown away with regular trash.

Single-use bedpans and urinals should be used. It is not recommended to rinse and reuse these items. Healthcare workers should wear personal protective equipment while handling contaminated items and dispose of them properly (Polovich & Olsen, 2018).

Double flushing at home may be useful in situations where there is insufficient volume or pressure to clear the toilet after use (Polovich & Olsen, 2018). Nurses should discuss the topic with patients prior to discharge and ultimately allow them to determine whether the additional flush is warranted. If using disposable adult diapers, underwear, or sanitary pads, healthcare workers and caregivers should seal them in two plastic

bags and throw them away with regular trash (Chemocare, n.d.).

Family members who handle contaminated excreta should wear gloves. If a private bathroom is not available for the patient in the home setting, one suggestion is that HD residue may be physically removed from the toilet seat and rim after use by wiping down with a sanitizing wipe (Polovich & Olsen, 2018). More research is needed on how well sanitizing wipes in the home setting and routine cleaning in the institutional setting reduce surface contamination with HDs.

REFERENCES

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