What should I do if my child misses a dose or vomits his medicine?
For drugs to have the maximum effect, it is essential to give the correct medicine at the
correct dose and at the correct time. However, if your child forgets to take his medicine,
inform your doctor. Do not double the next dose. If your child vomits the medicine do not
give another dose as the amount absorbed prior to vomiting cannot be calculated.

What foods should I give my child?
- All kinds of fresh home-cooked food is recommended.
- Do not reheat old food.
- Only give your child fruit that can be peeled i.e. bananas, melons & oranges.
- Fish, chicken and eggs are fine if your child likes them. These should be cooked
thoroughly and served fresh.
- Avoid take away food or food from vendors. This includes ice creams and sweets. Your
child may have crisps or packaged biscuits, chocolates or candies.
- Boil drinking water for 20 minutes and cool in the same container. Bottled drinking
water is fine. A water filter should only be used if it is changed frequently as
recommended.

REMEMBER UNCLEAN WATER CAN CAUSE SERIOUS INFECTIONS.

Can my child go to school?
After the intensive phases of therapy your child should go to school if your doctor thinks
your child is well enough.

Who can my child play with?
Your child can play with brothers and sisters. Your child can also play with friends if the
friends don’t have an infection or cold. Cancer is not infectious. Brothers and sisters or
friends will not get cancer from eating/playing with the affected child.

CANCER IS NOT CONTAGIOUS AND CANNOT SPREAD BY CONTACT

Contact Numbers

Doctor: .......................................................................................................................
Main Hospital: .......................................................................................................
Ward: .....................................................................................................................
Outpatients: .........................................................................................................
Nurse in charge: .................................................................................................
Local Hospital: ...................................................................................................
Lab for blood counts: ...........................................................................................

This leaflet was written by the CCLG Paediatric Oncology in Developing Countries (PODC)
Group, a group of consultants, doctors and nurses involved in treating children with cancer
across the world. It was produced in conjunction with the Children’s Cancer and Leukaemia
Group (CCLG) Publications Committee who have produced a number of information leaflets
to help parents of children with cancer in the UK. Email contactus@port.uk.com for more
information.

This leaflet is for general information only. It is important to remember that your doctor
understands your child’s medical needs and history so please follow their instructions.
How to prevent the main side effects and serious infections

Regular blood tests
Your child will have regular blood tests that will show you and the doctors if your child is at risk of developing an infection or if the dose of chemotherapy needs adjustment.

The bone marrow is the ‘factory’ that produces the different types of blood cells, each of which have a different job to do in the body. Chemotherapy kills cancer cells, but as a side effect it also suppresses the bone marrow that affects the blood count.

There are 3 main types of blood cells that the bone marrow makes:

- Red blood cells (containing haemoglobin) carry oxygen around the body and give your child energy. If the level is low, this is called anaemia; your child may be pale and tired, and sometimes may need a blood transfusion.
- White blood cells are the ‘soldiers’ that fight infections. There are different types of white blood cells, but the most important ones are called neutrophils. When the level of neutrophils drops below 1000, this is called neutropenia and your child is at higher risk of serious infection.
- Platelets help the blood to clot properly. If the levels are too low your child may develop bruises, red spots or bleeding such as nose bleeds or bleeding gums. Your child may need a platelet transfusion from time to time.

It is important to have the blood count checked regularly because the dose of medicine your child is given is adjusted according to these blood count results. Sometimes the medicine needs to be stopped for a period of time. For other cancers the blood counts will inform the doctors whether your child is ready to receive the next treatment.

Management of Infections
If your child has a neutrophil count less than 1000 AND has a temperature it is called febrile neutropenia. This can occur quite frequently without serious consequences but can also be a sign of serious infection that can be fatal in a matter of hours. This is why you MUST ring your doctor or go to the doctor immediately if your child has a fever. It is likely that your child will need to be started on intravenous antibiotics (drugs that fight infections).

If your child has a temperature, do not give medicine (such as Calpol, paracetamol, Ibuprofen, and Brufen) to bring down the temperature until your child has been seen by the doctor as this can hide the infection without actually treating it. This means that your child could get seriously ill without anybody realising it. If you have to travel far your doctor may arrange for you to have urgent care closer to where you live to prevent the infection from becoming serious.

SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE IMMEDIATELY IF YOUR CHILD HAS A FEVER OR IS UNWELL WHATEVER THE BLOOD COUNT.

Maintaining daily hygiene to avoid infections
Maintaining good daily hygiene is essential to help avoid infections. The following should be adhered to at all times:

- Wash hands thoroughly before giving any medicine or checking any bandages or wounds. Your doctor/nurse will explain the best way to wash your hands properly.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before cooking or preparing any food.
- Where possible a daily bath, clean clothes and good mouth hygiene are very important. Avoid playing in dirty surroundings. Wash your hands before eating and after going to the toilet.
- Freshly cooked, clean simple, food should be provided.
- Clean water supply is also very important.

Avoiding mouth infections:
Due to the way chemotherapy works your child’s mouth might become sore and painful and/or develop mouth ulcers that can become infected. You can help reduce the chance of this happening by making sure the teeth are cleaned properly and thoroughly at least twice a day, with a soft tooth brush. If you are provided with anti bacterial spray or mouthwash and sponges please use them as well as ensuring teeth are brushed twice a day.

Avoid contact with contagious diseases
If your child is going to a school or nursery you should tell them they must inform you if your child comes into contact with anyone that has or develops chicken pox or other infectious illnesses.

- Avoid contact with friends and relatives who have colds, open sores, diarrhea or other infectious illnesses.
- Children undergoing cancer chemotherapy may develop life threatening complications if they have chicken pox or measles. Your doctor will usually enquire at the very beginning of treatment whether or not your child has had chicken pox or has received the chicken pox and measles vaccines. If your child comes in contact with anyone with either of these conditions, you must contact the hospital urgently so that preventative measures can be taken.
- During the malaria season use mosquito netting and insect repellents to avoid getting malaria.
- Both malaria and dengue fever can be prevented by keeping your surroundings clean and draining any stagnant water.
- If the water supply in your area is not safe, give your child only boiled, or filtered water (remember to change filter regularly) to prevent waterborne infections like diarrhea.

Contact with animals
Animals can be a source of infection if they are not looked after properly and kept clean. If your family has a pet you have looked after for a long time, you should keep it. However hands must be washed after contact with pets to avoid infections.

Where possible, contact should be avoided with lizards, farm animals, wild or stray animals and birds.

Don’t introduce a cat or dog to the house if you don’t already have one.

If living on a farm and contact or working with animals can’t be avoided, clothes must be changed and hands washed thoroughly after contact.

Frequently asked questions about treatment
Why is it important to complete treatment even when my child is in remission and well?
Cancer treatment is given to make sure all cancer cells are killed. If treatment is stopped too soon, the cancer may come back and will then be more difficult to treat. Even if it causes side effects, treatment needs to continue to give your child the maximum chance of cure. However, please discuss this with your doctor because sometimes treatment needs to be modified if side effects are severe.