

Food Safety Tips

Chemotherapy increases your risk of infection. As a result, patients undergoing chemotherapy must use proper food handling methods.

Shopping

- Use hand sanitizer to sanitize shopping cart handles and your hands prior to shopping and especially prior to handling produce.
- Place raw meat and poultry packages in plastic bags before putting them in the shopping cart with other fresh foods.
- Choose fruits and vegetables that can be cleaned and scrubbed. For example, avoid raspberries and sprouts.
- Choose hard cheeses. Avoid soft cheese or cheeses with live cultures.
- Do not purchase foods from shared bins in grocery stores or from street vendors.
- Buy and consume pasteurized milk, cheeses, yogurts and juices.
- Avoid pre-cooked refrigerated meals that are pre-plated for purchase. It is difficult to assure that safe storage and handling procedures have been maintained.

Food Storage

- Refrigerate food promptly after shopping and cooking.
- Store foods in containers away from insects, rodents or pets.
- Maintain safe temperatures in your refrigerator and freezer. Check about every 6 months:
 - Refrigerator: 20-40°F
 - Freezer: 0°F or lower
- Cover foods on refrigerator shelves.
- Do not store raw meat, poultry or fish in direct contact with cooked foods. Always place cooked foods above raw foods in the refrigerator to prevent contamination.
- Store cooked foods in shallow storage containers to allow food to cool to optimum storage temperature swiftly.
- Do not stack stored hot foods in the refrigerator. This can delay the cooling of food to proper temperature.
- Suggested storage times for refrigerated foods:
 - Raw fish and seafood: 1-2 days
 - Raw chicken, turkey, ground hamburger and other ground meats: 1-2 days



Images courtesy of Food and Drug Administration

- Raw steaks, chops and roast: 3-5 days
- Fully cooked leftovers: 3-4 days
- Luncheon meats: 3-5 days
- Milk: 5 days
- Raw fruits and vegetables: 7 days
- Raw eggs in shell: 7-14 days
- Raw eggs out of shell: 2-4 days

Observe and monitor food expiration dates. Discard food that looks or smells rotten, slimy or moldy.

Food Preparation

- Before preparing, cooking or eating food, wash hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds.
- Clean counter tops by washing with hot soapy water and thoroughly rinsing. Sanitize with a solution containing chlorine bleach (1 part bleach to 10 parts water).
- Use one cutting board for raw vegetables/fruits and one cutting board for raw meats. Clean each board thoroughly after use. Avoid using porous cutting boards, such as wooden ones, for cutting meats and fish.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly before cutting. Use a vegetable brush designed for this purpose.
- Thaw meat and poultry in the refrigerator, not at room temperature. Cover thawing meats and place them on bottom shelf separate from other foods.
- Use clean utensils and knives. Use a clean knife **every time** you cut a different food. Use a different spoon for tasting food; not the one used for stirring food. Also use a different utensil to serve food.
- Keep the microwave clean, as food debris can grow bacteria.



Meal Times

- Eat fully cooked meats, poultry, fish and eggs. Meat should be cooked to at least 160° F and poultry to at least 180° F.
- Avoid eating prepared foods that contain raw eggs or fish. Examples are Caesar salad dressing, sushi, raw cookie dough and cake batter, hollandaise sauce and homemade eggnog or ice cream.
- Avoid open salad bars at restaurants.
- If drinking water from a private well is approved by your doctor, test the water every year. The health department or local water department can tell you how to test it.

Resources

- National Institutes of Health: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2603155/>
- Foodsafety.gov: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/>

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