

*If you have
any questions,
please talk
with your nurse
or dietitian.*

Food Safety: A Guide for People With Weakened Immune Systems

Food safety is an important part of your care. Some treatments or health conditions can weaken the body's immune system and make it more difficult for the body to fight against infection or disease. This brochure will give you recommendations to help you prevent foodborne illness.

Food safety guidelines

Dairy products

- Buy only pasteurized milk, cheese, yogurt and ice cream.
- Avoid cheese made with unpasteurized (raw) milk, as well as all blue-veined cheeses.

Meat, fish and eggs

- Avoid raw and undercooked meat, poultry, fish, and shellfish such as oysters, ceviche and sushi.
- Heat all deli meats and hotdogs until steaming before eating.
- Avoid refrigerated pate and meat spreads. Canned or shelf-stable pate is OK.
- Avoid refrigerated smoked seafood, such as lox. Canned or shelf-stable smoked seafood is OK.
- Cook eggs until yolks and whites are firm. Avoid foods that contain raw or undercooked eggs.

Fruits and vegetables

- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water, including any skins that will be peeled before cooking or eating.
- Buy only pasteurized fruit and vegetable juices.
- Avoid buying pre-cut fruits or vegetables at the grocery store or at restaurants.
- Do not eat raw vegetable sprouts.

Other foods

- Cook or reheat tofu, tempeh and miso until steaming.
- Avoid raw unroasted nuts, raw fresh nut butters and nuts in the shell. All shelf-stable nut butters are OK.
- Avoid raw honey or honey in the comb.
- Avoid eating uncooked grains such as raw flour in raw dough or batter.

- Avoid kombucha.
- Avoid well water unless it is tested yearly and OK to drink or use.

Stay clean

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds before and after preparing food, and before eating. Rinse your hands thoroughly with clean water and towel dry.
- Wash utensils, cutting boards and counter tops with hot, soapy water.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water before peeling or cutting. Do not use soaps, detergents or bleach solutions for washing produce.

Separate food and utensils

- Keep cutting boards for raw meat, fish and poultry separate from those for other foods.
- Keep raw meat, fish and poultry separate in a plastic bag in the grocery cart.
- Always marinate food in the refrigerator. Sauce that is used to marinate raw meat should not be used again on cooked foods.
- Never put cooked food back on the same plate that held the raw food.

Cooking foods

Be sure to cook meat, poultry, eggs and seafood thoroughly by using a meat thermometer.

Safe Minimum Cooking Temperatures

| Food | Type | Internal Temperature (degrees F) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ground meat and meat mixtures | Beef, pork, veal, lamb | 160 |
| | Turkey, chicken | 165 |
| Fresh beef, veal and lamb | Steaks, roasts, chops Rest time: 3 minutes | 145 |
| Poultry | All poultry (breasts, whole bird, legs, thighs, wings, ground poultry, giblets and stuffing) | 165 |
| Pork and ham | Fresh pork, including fresh ham Rest time: 3 minutes | 145 |
| | Precooked ham (to reheat) Note: Reheat cooked hams packaged in USDA-inspected plants to 140 degrees F | 165 |
| Seafood | Fish with fins | 145 or cook until flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork |
| | Shrimp, lobster, crab, scallops | Cook until flesh is pearly or white and opaque |
| | Clams, oysters, mussels | Cook until shells open during cooking |

| Food | Type | Internal Temperature (degrees F) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Eggs and egg dishes | Eggs | Cook until yolk and white are firm |
| | Egg dishes (such as frittata, quiche) | 160 |
| Leftovers and casseroles | All | 165 |

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Keeping foods cold

- Keep your refrigerator temperature below 40 degrees F.
- Never thaw meat, fish or poultry on the counter at room temperature. Thaw in the microwave, in the refrigerator or in water that is changed every 30 minutes.
- Put perishable foods in the refrigerator within 2 hours of serving. Eggs or dairy-based foods should not be left out for more than 1 hour.
- Use defrosted foods right away and do not refreeze them.
- Check dates on packages carefully. Throw out any outdated products and any moldy foods.
- Throw out refrigerated leftovers after 3 days.

Tips for eating out

- Avoid buffets, salad bars and street vendors.
- Avoid food prepared behind the deli counter, such as sliced deli meat or cheese (unless heated to 165 degrees F or steaming), as well as pre-made deli salads such as tuna salad, chicken salad, potato salad and coleslaw.
- Avoid self-service bins such as those for breads, rolls and pastries.
- Only buy prepared items that can be reheated to 165 degrees F before eating.
- Cooked foods are the safest to eat when eating at restaurants.
- Do not eat raw fruits and vegetables when eating out at restaurants.
- Use caution at family-style or potluck-style meals.