



## Patient Information

# Food safety advice for patients receiving chemotherapy

### Introduction

A common side effect of chemotherapy can be to reduce the body's resistance to fight infections. This can mean that you are at greater risk of infection from bacteria or fungus in food.

The food safety advice in this leaflet will help you to reduce your risk of picking up a food-related infection.

### Food safety - general guidelines

#### Shopping

- Always check 'use by' or 'best before' dates on food packaging.
- Avoid buying food with damaged or broken packaging.
- Avoid buying fruit and vegetables that are mouldy, bruised or damaged.
- Buy chilled and frozen foods last and take them home as quickly as possible. Using an insulated container or cool bag can help to keep food at the correct temperature.

#### Storage

- Keep your fridge between 0 and 5°C and your freezer below -18 °C. If you are unsure if your fridge or freezer is at the correct temperature you can purchase a thermometer to check this.
- Store cooked food at the top of the fridge.
- Keep raw or defrosting meat or fish at the bottom of the fridge in a covered container.
- Do not overload your fridge or freezer.
- Never refreeze thawed food.
- Keep eggs in the fridge.

### **Food preparation**

- Always wash your hands with warm water and soap before preparing food.
- Wash your hands after going to the toilet and after touching pets, dirty washing, rubbish or raw food.
- Wash all fruit and vegetables.
- Use separate knives and chopping boards for raw food and cooked food.
- Ensure all work surfaces are clean before food preparation.

### **Cooking**

- Thaw frozen food on the bottom shelf of the fridge.
- Cook all food thoroughly and make sure it is piping hot all the way through.
- Cook meat until the juices are clear.
- Follow manufacturer's guidance on the food package for cooking food.

### **Reheating Food**

- Do not reheat cooked rice. Eat rice as soon as it is cooked.
- Microwave cookers can be used for defrosting and for heating prepared foods. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for prepared foods.
- For home-cooked foods, cover food and allow it to cool at room temperature within an hour after cooking and then refrigerate or freeze.
- Eat reheated food within 24 hours of preparing or defrosting it. Do not reheat food more than once.

### **Eating Out**

- Choose freshly prepared food from good-quality restaurants. Avoid salad bars, street vendors, market stalls, buffets, all-you-can-eat restaurants and ice-cream vans.
- Ensure your food is piping hot and cooked all the way through when served.
- Avoid foods which have been left out on display such as Donar kebab meat
- You can check restaurant hygiene ratings at **[ratings.food.gov.uk](https://ratings.food.gov.uk)**



Food group	Foods to avoid	Suitable alternatives
Dairy products	<p>All unpasteurised dairy products, such as milk sold on local farms.</p> <p>Mould-ripened cheese such as Brie, Camembert, Goat's cheese.</p> <p>Blue veined cheese, Stilton, Danish Blue.</p> <p>Homemade cheese or soft cheese made with unpasteurised milk Paneer, Feta, Parmesan.</p> <p>Probiotic or "bio" foods, drinks or supplements e.g. Actimel, Yakult, ProViva. Yoghurt which is described on the label as bio or probiotic*.</p>	<p>Any pasteurised, sterilised or UHT milk. Soya milk.</p> <p>Parmesan, Mozzarella and other cheeses made with pasteurised milk.</p> <p>Vacuum-packed, pasteurised and hard cheeses Cheddar, Double Gloucester, Edam, Gouda, Red Leicester.</p> <p>Processed cheese or cream cheese Dairylea, Kraft, Laughing Cow, Philadelphia, Cottage cheese, Halloumi.</p> <p>Yoghurts labelled as being made with live bacteria; or plain, Greek and fruit yoghurts – as long as they are not described as 'bio' or 'probiotic'.</p>
<p>*The live bacteria used in making yoghurts are not harmful. So yoghurt described as 'live' is safe to eat. However the bacteria used in bio or probiotic foods cannot be guaranteed as safe.</p>		
Egg & egg products	<p>All raw or undercooked eggs (including eggs with the British Lion mark) for example homemade mayonnaise, homemade ice-cream, mousse, meringue, egg-nog.</p> <p>Any sauce or dressing containing raw egg or undercooked egg .Caesar dressing, hollandaise sauce and Béarnaise sauce.</p>	<p>Hard boiled eggs, well-cooked omelettes, well-cooked scrambled egg.</p> <p>Shop-bought mayonnaise, meringue, mousse and other products made with pasteurised egg.</p>
Meat, fish & seafood	<p>Raw/undercooked meat, fish or poultry (e.g. meat which is still pink, sushi, caviar and oysters)</p> <p>Food products from deli counters</p> <p>Any type of unpasteurised pâté (meat or vegetable)</p> <p>Avoid smoked salmon unless eaten directly from a freshly opened packet</p> <p>Raw or lightly cooked shellfish (e.g. mussels, prawns)</p>	<p>Well cooked meat, fish and poultry. Tinned meat and fish. Vacuum-packed cooked fish eaten straight from a new packet</p> <p>Vacuum-packed cold meats</p> <p>Pasteurised pâté and paste in tins or jars that do not need to be refrigerated</p> <p>Vacuum-packed smoked salmon eaten straight from a new packet</p> <p>Well cooked shellfish, such as in risotto, stir-fry or curry</p>

### **Helpful hints if you are losing weight or have a reduced appetite**

- Take advantage of eating at times when you do have an appetite.
- Eat small, frequent meals and snacks.
- Choose nourishing drinks for such as full cream milk, milkshakes, hot chocolate or malted drinks, for example Horlicks or Ovaltine.
- Food can be enriched by adding extra cream, butter, oil or grated cheese.
- Choose full cream milk and dairy products where possible instead of low fat versions.

If your appetite is poor or you are losing weight speak with your Doctor or Keyworker. They may suggest you meet with a dietician who can offer advice on nutritional supplement drinks and ways to increase your food intake.

### **Help and support**

The following organisations can also provide helpful information and support.

#### **Bloodwise**

www.bloodwise.org.uk  
Tel: 0808 2080 888 (Mon-Fri 10am-4pm)

#### **Macmillan Cancer Support**

macmillan.org.uk  
Tel: 0808 808 0000 (Mon-Fri 9am-8pm)

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