

Food Safety for the Immunocompromised Patient

When your immune system is weak you are at greater risk of getting sick from foods with bacteria, viruses, and mold. This food safety guide will help you avoid foodborne illnesses.

Below is a guide as to how long you may need to follow these guidelines:

- **Allogeneic stem cell transplant:** follow this guide during pre-transplant chemotherapy and until you are no longer taking drugs that suppress your immune system.
- **Autologous stem cell transplant:** follow this guide during pre-transplant chemotherapy and for the first 3 months after transplant.
- If you are an immunocompromised cancer patient but did not have a stem cell transplant, follow this guide until you are no longer immunocompromised.

Types of Food	High Risk Foods to Avoid
Meats, Poultry and Seafood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raw, dehydrated, or undercooked meat, poultry, fish or shellfish • Smoked or pickled fish and homemade smoked animal meats*
Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpasteurized (raw) milk • Kefir and yogurt are safe to eat, even with live cultures
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foods with raw or undercooked eggs like homemade Caesar salad dressing, homemade raw cookie dough, and homemade eggnog
Fruits/Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwashed fruits and vegetables • Non-pasteurized fruit and vegetable juice • Raw sprouts (alfalfa, bean or other sprouts) • Raw mushrooms • Packaged, frozen fruits and vegetables are safe to eat
Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft cheeses made from unpasteurized (raw) milk like brie, camembert, blue-veined, and queso fresco • These cheeses are safe to eat if cooked • Homemade or deli paneer and labneh
Hot Dogs and Deli Meats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot dogs, deli meats, and luncheon meats that have not been reheated to steaming hot or 165°F
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpasteurized pâtés or meat spreads • Raw honey • Miso paste • Raw brewer's yeast • Homemade jerky** • Reheat left over foods to steaming hot before eating • Throw out left over foods if greater than 2 days old
Drinks/Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun tea • Kombucha • Well water • Water from lakes, rivers, streams, or springs • All bottled water is safe to drink

*Smoking Meat and Poultry | Food Safety and Inspection Service (usda.gov)

**Jerky and Food Safety | Food Safety and Inspection Service (usda.gov)

General Food Safety Guidelines

- Wash hands, utensils and work surfaces often.
- Separate raw meats, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in your shopping cart, grocery bag, and fridge.
- Thaw meat, fish, and poultry in the fridge or microwave – not on the counter.
- Cook foods to the right temperature. Refer to the table below.
- Chill raw meat/poultry and cooked leftovers within 2 hours. Your fridge should be kept at 40°F or below.
- Avoid foods from delis, buffets, salad bars, potlucks, and bulk food bins. Avoid free food samples in stores.
- Do not buy opened or damaged products, expired foods, or cans that are rusted, bulging or dented.
- Select fruits and vegetables that look and smell fresh and do not have bruises, damaged skins, or mold.
- Wash all raw fruits and vegetables before peeling or cutting. To clean, run under cool water or soak in a basin of water for 1-2 minutes and drain. Do not use soaps, bleach or detergents on produce.

Water Safety

- Avoid well water. No matter how often well water is tested, you can't be sure it will stay safe.
- Tap water is water from your faucet. If the water source is a city water supply or a municipal well it is clean and safe in most cases. If you have questions about the safety of your water, check with your local health department and water utility.
- Bottled water is also safe. Choose water that has one of these statements on the label: reverse osmosis, distillation/distilled or filtered through an absolute 1 micron or smaller filter.

USDA Recommended Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures				
Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb, Steaks, Roasts, Chops	Fish	Ground Beef, Veal, Lamb	Egg Dishes	Whole, Pieces, and Ground Turkey, Chicken, Duck
145°F with a 3 minute rest time	145°F	160°F	160°F	165°F

If you have more questions, please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500.**

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770.**

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#476