
Preventing Infection During Treatment

Cancer and its treatment can weaken your immune system and leave you at risk for infections. Cancer-fighting drugs work by killing cancer cells as well as healthy white blood cells. When your white blood cell count is low, you are at the highest risk for infections.

There are several things that can be done to reduce your exposure to bacteria and lower your chances of getting sick:

- Wash your hands frequently in warm, soapy water:
 - before and after touching food, garbage, pets, face, hair, sores or cuts, other people.
 - before and after eating.
 - after using the restroom.
 - after coughing or sneezing.
- Shower or bathe daily for good personal hygiene.
- Brush your teeth and gums 3 times per day.
- Do not share food, beverages, utensils or other personal items, such as toothbrushes.
- Limit visitors, especially anyone with signs of illness or infection.
- Use gloves for household chores such as cleaning or gardening.

Recommendations for Safe Food Handling:

- Purchase and consume food before the expiration and “sell by” dates.
- Store foods at safe temperatures:
 - Refrigerator temperature should be kept below 40° F.
 - Freezer temperature should be kept below 0° F.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Use separate cutting boards for meats, raw fruits and vegetables.
- Thaw foods in the refrigerator or microwave. Never thaw foods at room temperature. Cook foods immediately after thawing.
- Refrigerate all leftovers within 2 hours of cooking. Be sure to dispose of foods not eaten within 1 week.
- Do not consume undercooked foods such as meats and eggs. They must be fully cooked.
- Keep hot food hot (above 140°F) and cold food cold (below 40°F).
- Substitute frozen pasteurized eggs or powdered egg whites for raw eggs in recipes such as eggnog, Caesar salad dressing and meringues.
- Clean and sanitize food preparation surfaces and utensils after each use.