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# Preventing Infection During Treatment

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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.