

# Immunocompromised Diet for BMT Patients

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An immunocompromised (im-YOU-noh-KOM-pruh-mized) diet is also called a low bacterial diet. This diet is used to help decrease the amount of bacteria a person who has a weakened immune system eats. People who have had a transplant are at a higher risk to get sick from contaminated foods or drinks. **You need to follow the general food safety guidelines listed in this handout to lower your risk of getting sick from food.**

## General Food Safety Guidelines

The list below highlights food safety guidelines to follow. For a full list of guidelines, ask for the patient education handout, Food Safety Guide.

### **Wash your hands and surfaces often when handling food.**

- Wash your hands using warm water and soap. Rub your hands together on all sides, between your fingers and around your nails for at least 20 seconds.
- Use clean dishcloths every day. Bacteria grows easily in dirty, wet dishcloths.
- Do not use sponges to clean dishes and utensils. Sponges can hold germs that contaminate food and dishes.

**Do not cross contaminate.** Use separate cutting boards, plates and utensils for raw and cooked foods.

- Do not thaw frozen food at room temperature. Thaw food in the microwave or place in the refrigerator.

### **When preparing food:**

- Fully wash all fruits and vegetables, rubbing them under running water before peeling and cutting.

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**This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

- Cook foods to proper temperature. Use a food thermometer to test that the food is done. Ask for the “Food Safety Guide” patient education handout for properly cooked food temperatures.
- Keep hot foods hot (above 140 degrees Fahrenheit) and cold foods cold (below 41 degrees Fahrenheit).
- Perishable foods should not be kept at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- If a home or store bought canned food has a lid bulging, or if the food has any bad odors or looks strange after opening, throw it out.

**Refrigerate foods right away.** Refrigerate only as much as can be eaten in 3 to 5 days. Freeze the rest within two hours of cooking.

- All leftovers should be reheated. Do not eat cold leftovers.

**Reheated foods should reach 165 degrees Fahrenheit or a rolling boil before being eaten.**

**When storing food:**

- Check expiration dates. Throw away foods older than their “use by” dates. **When in doubt, throw it out.**

## **Eating Guidelines by Food Group**

### **Milk and Dairy Products**

Most dairy products sold in the grocery store are safe to eat.

**While on this diet you should not eat:**

- Moldy and soft cheeses, such as blue, gorgonzola, brie, feta or queso.
- Unpasteurized dairy and cheese products:
  - ▶ To tell if a dairy or cheese product is pasteurized, look at the food label. The label will either say “pasteurized” on it, or the ingredient list will list “pasteurized milk” as an ingredient.
  - ▶ If you purchase items at a small, local dairy, ask if it is pasteurized.
  - ▶ If a dairy product is labeled as “raw” it most often means it is not pasteurized.
- Desserts and pastries with cream or custard that have been out of the refrigerator or freezer for more than 2 hours.

## **Meat or Meat Substitutes**

If your meat is cooked to the proper temperature, it is safe for you to eat.

### **While on this diet you should not eat:**

- All raw or undercooked meats, seafood and eggs.
- Products that contain raw or under cooked meats, seafood, and eggs (sushi, homemade Caesar dressing, raw cookie dough, egg nog or homemade mayonnaise).
- Eggs with a runny yolk, such as over easy and poached eggs.
  - ▶ If you want to eat runny yolk eggs, you can buy “pasteurized in the shell” eggs made by Davidson’s Safest Choice Pasteurized Eggs.
- Raw or under cooked tofu sold in the refrigerated section.
  - ▶ Shelf stable tofu has been heat treated and is safe to eat without cooking.
- Refrigerated smoked seafood, pickled fish, ceviche, caviar, raw or cooked clams, oysters and mussels.
- Deli meats, both pre-packaged and deli counter sliced meats, as well as hot dogs or sausages, unless heated to steaming before eating.

## **Fruits and Vegetables**

Most fruits and vegetables are safe for you to eat if you wash them well. You should also wash the skins of the fruits that you peel.

### **To wash your fruits and vegetables:**

- First inspect them to make sure they have no bruises, holes in the skin or signs of insect damage.
- Then rub them under running water for 20 seconds. For extra dirty fruits and vegetables, like melon and potatoes, you can scrub with a soft brush to remove the dirt.
- You do not need to peel the fruit or vegetable after washing, unless you prefer it this way.
- Wash fruits and vegetables even if they have been pre-cut or pre-washed.

**While on this diet you should not eat:**

- Unwashed fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs.
- Raw fruit and vegetables with a rough texture such as raspberries, and strawberries, broccoli, and cauliflower. Frozen, canned, cooked or dried versions of these foods are okay to eat.
- Unpasteurized fruit and vegetable juice.
- Restaurant or deli foods that contain raw fruits or vegetables.
- Uncooked, raw nuts and roasted nuts in the shell.
- All vegetable sprouts (alfalfa, mung bean sprouts).

**Bread and Cereals**

Breads and cereals are safe for you to eat.

**While on this diet you should not eat:**

- Raw, uncooked grain products or yeast.
- Do not touch raw yeast. You can eat any foods made with it. You just do not want to knead or mix dough with raw yeast due to the risk of breathing in the raw yeast.

**Water**

- Do not drink well water while you have a weakened immune system.
  - ▶ Well water has been found to be safe to drink if treated through a reverse osmosis filtration system. Other filtration systems are not safe.
- If you have well water at home, boil the water for at least 1 minute or use bottled water for drinking water and to brush your teeth.
- When you are away from your home, drink bottled water.
- Do not drink water from a sink in a public place.
- Do not share drinks with other people.
- Do not use public drinking fountains, water fountains, soda fountain machines or ice machines.

**Other foods you should not eat or drink:**

- Raw or non-pasteurized honey, juices or beers.
- Salad bars, buffets, bulk food bins in stores, food samples or snacks that are out in the open where others may touch them.

- Raw or unpasteurized miso products.
  - ▶ Most commercial miso products are fine to eat.
- Yerba Mate tea and sun tea.
- Fountain soda pop beverages that are from outside of The James Hospital.

### **Can I bring foods from home to the hospital?**

- You may bring your favorite foods and snacks from home while you are in the hospital. The foods must follow the safety guidelines listed in this handout.
- A freezer and refrigerator are available on the hospital nursing unit. The unit kitchen has a toaster oven and microwave.

### **Can I bring foods from a restaurant to the hospital?**

- You may bring food from a restaurant to the hospital, if it is transported safely. The restaurant foods must follow the safety guidelines listed in this handout.
- Keep hot food hot. Reheated food should reach 165 degrees Fahrenheit or a rolling boil before eaten.
- Keep cold foods cold (below 41 degrees Fahrenheit).
- Do not eat fresh fruits or vegetables from a restaurant.
- Condiments such as ketchup, mustard, and mayonnaise from restaurants are okay to eat as long as they are individually packaged.
- When in doubt about the food temperature or how long it has been stored, throw it out.

### **When I leave the hospital, will I still be on an immunocompromised diet?**

- You will be on this diet while you are in the hospital.
- **If you have an autologous transplant**, you can re-start a normal diet when you leave the hospital or when your blood counts improve. Continue to follow the general food safety guidelines in the Food Safety Guide handout.
- **If you have an allogeneic transplant**, you will stay on the immunocompromised diet for the first 100 days after your transplant **or**, until you no longer need to take immunosuppressant medicines (tacrolimus or steroids).

**If you have questions or concerns about your diet and food safety, talk to your doctor or dietitian.**