

Immunocompromised Diet Guidelines

An immunocompromised 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. This includes people who:

- Have genetic defects.
- Have infections, such as HIV and AIDS.
- Have certain cancers, such as leukemia, lymphoma and multiple myeloma.
- Have cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy.
- Have end stage renal disease or who are on dialysis.
- Have diabetes that is not well controlled.
- Have cirrhosis.
- Take medicines, such as steroids or anti-rejection post-transplant medicines.
- Are pregnant.

You will need to follow general food safety guidelines and avoid some foods to reduce 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 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 grow 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.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

wexnermedical.osu.edu

- **When preparing food:**

- Fully wash all fruits and vegetables, rubbing them under running water before peeling and cutting.
- Cook foods to proper temperature. Use a food thermometer to test that the food is done.
- Keep hot foods hot (above 140 degrees Fahrenheit) and cold foods cold (below 41 degrees Fahrenheit).
- 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.

Foods 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.

Foods you should not eat:

- All raw or under cooked meats, seafood and eggs.
- Products containing raw or under cooked meats, seafood or eggs, such as sushi, homemade Caesar dressing, 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 purchase “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 and pickled fish, ceviche, caviar, raw or cooked clams, oysters or mussels.
- Deli meats, both pre-packaged and deli counter sliced meats, as well as hotdogs 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. Remember to also wash the skins of 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 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.

Foods you should not eat:

- Unwashed fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs.
- Raw fruits and vegetables with a rough texture, such as raspberries, strawberries, broccoli and cauliflower.
- 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, such as alfalfa and mung bean sprouts.

Breads and Cereals

Breads and cereals are safe for you to eat.

You should not:

- Eat or drink products with uncooked brewer's yeast, like unpasteurized beer.
- 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 unpasteurized honey, juices or beer.
- Salad bars, buffets, bulk food bins in stores, food samples or snacks that are out in the open where others may touch them.
 - If you are going to a family function where the food will be set out “buffet style”, you can still eat. Try to be one of the first people through the line to make your plate.
- Raw or unpasteurized miso products. Most commercial miso products are fine to eat.
- Yerba Mate tea and sun tea.

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

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, go to wexnermedical.osu.edu/patiented or contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or health-info@osu.edu.