



## University Hospitals and Clinics, Patient Education

Living with Your Body



### NEUTROPENIC DIET: FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES

Food-borne illness is occurring with increasing frequency. Sources of food poisoning may be the handler, the environment (such as a contaminated work surface) or the food itself. Bacteria and other organisms exist in most common foods. Most of these organisms are of little risk to the average healthy person. However, infection is of major concern to persons undergoing chemotherapy, or a marrow or stem cell transplant. The food these persons eat must be safe.

These food safety guidelines are intended to supplement immunosuppressed patient diet guidelines, which identify higher risk foods. By following safe food practices, patients and caregivers can reduce the risk of food-borne illness. If you have any questions regarding food safety and diet guidelines, feel free to talk to your dietitian.

#### Safe Food Handling

- Wash hands frequently—before, during and after food preparation. Use plenty of hot water and soap and wash for at least 20 seconds (you can sing the “birthday song” twice).
- Cook meat until well done, until all juices are clear.
- Thaw meat, fish or poultry in the refrigerator away from raw fruits and vegetables. Place on a dish to catch drips. Cook defrosted meat right away; do not refreeze. If you are in a hurry you can thaw in the microwave—but you must cook the meat immediately.
- Never leave perishable food out of the refrigerator for over **two hours**.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running cold water before peeling and /or cutting. (It is not recommended for patients to peel or cut fruits or vegetables).
- Wash the tops of canned foods before opening. Clean the can opener before and after use.
- During food preparation, do not taste the food with the same utensil used for stirring.
- Cook eggs until the whites and yolks are completely hard cooked.
- **NEVER TASTE FOOD THAT LOOKS OR SMELLS STRANGE!**

### **Microwave Cooking**

- Microwave cooking can leave cold spots in food where bacteria can survive. Rotate the dish a quarter turn once or twice during cooking if there is no turntable in the appliance.
- When heating leftovers, use a loose-fitting lid or vented plastic wrap to cover. Stir several times during reheating. When heated thoroughly, cover and let sit for 2 minutes.

### **Grocery Shopping**

- Check “Sell By” and “Use By” dates. Select only the freshest food product.
- Check packaging date on fresh meats, poultry and seafood. Do not purchase if past the “sell by” or “use by” date.
- Reject damaged, swollen, rusted or deeply dented cans. Check that packaged and boxed foods are properly sealed.
- Select unblemished fruits and vegetables. Fresh fruits and vegetables should look and smell fresh. Wilted salad greens may be an indication that the product is old and not properly handled. Wash all fruits and vegetables (including bagged pre-washed salad greens and vegetables) before using.
- Reject foods with any mold present.
- Avoid foods from delicatessens, including prepared salads and sliced meats and cheese. In the bakery, avoid unrefrigerated cream- and custard-containing desserts and pastries.
- Avoid foods from self-serve bulk containers or bins.
- Avoid yogurt and ice cream products dispensed from soft-serve machines, especially public self-serve machines.
- Avoid tasting free food samples.
- Avoid cracked, unrefrigerated eggs. Liquid pasteurized egg products may be used instead of eggs in the shell.
- Purchase frozen and refrigerated foods last, especially during the summer months.
- Store groceries promptly after purchase. Never leave perishable food in the car.