



Gynecologic Disease Center

At Walter Reed Army Medical Center

Patient's Guide to A Neutropenic Diet

Neutropenia is a condition that is caused by one having a low white blood cell count. A patient who is neutropenic (i.e. those undergoing Chemotherapy) are more likely to develop an infection. These infections can be caused by bacteria, which are found in food or beverages.

Below are guidelines to assist you in choosing the safest food and drinks possible for that period of time when your blood counts are low. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO WORRY WHEN YOUR BLOOD COUNTS ARE NORMAL.**

Safe Food Handling:

- Keep foods at safe temperatures; cook foods to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F and cold foods below 40°F.
- Cook meats until well done- there should be no remaining pink. Red meat should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F and poultry to 180°F.
- Thaw meat, fish, or poultry in the refrigerator or microwave in a dish to catch drips. Use defrosted foods right away; do not refreeze.
- Never leave perishable foods out of the refrigerator for over two hours. Egg dishes, cream and mayonnaise-based foods should not be left unrefrigerated for more than one hour.
- Divide large amounts of food into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator. Refrigerate only as much as can be eaten in 2 to 3 days; freeze the rest.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water before peeling or cutting; cut away bruised areas.
- Wash tops of canned foods before opening. Wash can opener after each use with warm, soapy water.
- During food preparation, do not taste food with the same utensil used for stirring.
- **NEVER TASTE FOOD THAT LOOKS OR SMELLS STRANGE!!!**
- Cook eggs until the whites are completely hard and the yolks begin to thicken. The yolk should no longer be runny but need not be hard.

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 lid or vented plastic wrap for thorough heating; stir several times during reheating.



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Specific Food Guidelines:

Food Groups	Allowed	NOT Allowed
Dairy	<p>All pasteurized, grade “A” milk and mild products.</p> <p>Commercially-packaged cheese and cheese products made with pasteurized milk (i.e. mild and medium Cheddar, Mozzarella, Parmesan, Swiss, etc.)</p> <p>Pasteurized yogurt.</p> <p>Dry, refrigerated, and frozen pasteurized whipped topping.</p> <p>Ice Cream, frozen yogurt, sherbet, ice cream bars, homemade milkshakes.</p> <p>Commercial nutritional supplements and baby formulas, liquid and powdered.</p>	<p>Unpasteurized or raw milk, cheese, yogurt, and other milk products.</p> <p>Cheeses from delicatessens.</p> <p>Cheeses containing chili peppers or other uncooked vegetables.</p> <p>Cheeses with molds (i.e. blue, Stilton, Roquefort, gorgonzola, Sharp cheddar, brie, camembert, feta cheese, farmer’s cheese.</p>
Vegetables	<p>All cooked frozen or canned vegetables.</p> <p>All cooked herbs & spices (add at least 5 minutes before end of cooking)</p>	<p>Raw vegetables, salads, Caesar salads with Caesar dressing</p> <p>Pepper</p> <p>Garnishes</p> <p>Uncooked herbs & spices.</p>
Fruits & Nuts	<p>Canned & frozen fruit and fruit juices.</p> <p>Thick skinned fruits (oranges, bananas, watermelon)</p> <p>WASH WELL BEFORE CUTTING</p> <p>Melons cut up and used immediately</p> <p>Canned or bottled roasted nuts</p> <p>Nuts in baked products</p> <p>Commercially packaged peanut butter</p>	<p>Dried fruits</p> <p>Raw fruit; foods containing raw fruits</p> <p>Unpasteurized fruit and vegetable juices</p> <p>Raw nuts</p> <p>Roasted nuts in the shell</p> <p>Pre-cut fresh fruit</p>



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Food Groups	Allowed	NOT Allowed
Bread, Grain, and Cereal Products	All breads, bagels, rolls, pan-cakes, sweet rolls, waffles, French toast, potato chips, corn chips, tortilla chips, pretzels, popcorn Cooked pasta, rice, and other grain All cereals, cooked and ready-to-eat	Raw grain products Bakery breads, cakes, donuts, muffins Potato/Macaroni salad
Entrees, Soups	All cooked entrees and soups	All miso products (i.e. miso soup)
Meat and Meat Substitutes	All well-cooked or canned meats (beef, pork, lamb, poultry, fish, shellfish, game, ham, bacon, sausage, hot dogs) Well-cooked eggs (white cooked firm with thickened yolk acceptable, i.e. hard boiled, over hard) Pasteurized egg substitutes (i.e. Egg Beaters) Commercially-packaged salami, bologna, and other luncheon meats Canned and commercially-packaged hard smoked fish, refrigerated after opening. Cooked tofu (which must be cut into 1" cubes or smaller and boiled a minimum of 5 minutes in water or broth before eating or using in recipes)	Raw or uncooked meat, poultry, fish, game, tofu Meats and cold cuts from delicatessen Hard cured salami in natural wrap Cold smoked salmon, lox Pickled fish Tempe (tempeh) products Sushi Raw oysters/clams
Beverages	Tap water Commercial bottled distilled and natural waters All canned, bottled, powdered beverages Instant and brewed coffee, tea, cold brewed tea made with boiling water Brewed herbal teas using commercially-packaged tea bags Commercial nutritional supplements, liquid and powdered	Well water (unless tested yearly & found safe) Cold-brewed tea made with warm or cold water sun tea Egg nog Fresh Apple cider Homemade lemonade Spring water



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Food Groups	Allowed	NOT Allowed
Fats	Oil, Shortening Refrigerated lard, margarine, butter Commercial shelf-stable mayonnaise and salad dressings (including cheese-based salad dressings, refrigerated after opening)	Fresh salad dressings containing aged cheese (i.e. blue, Roquefort) or raw eggs, stored in refrigerated case
Desserts	Refrigerated commercial and homemade cakes, pies, pastries, and pudding Refrigerated cream-filled cupcakes (i.e. Twinkies, Ding Dong), fruit pies (i.e. Pop tarts, Hostess fruit pies), and canned pudding	Unrefrigerated cream-filled pastry products (not shelf-stable) Cream or custard filled donuts
Other	Salt, granulated sugar, brown sugar, Jam, Jelly, Syrups (refrigerated after opening) Commercially-packaged (pasteurized) honey Catsup, mustard, BBQ sauce, other condiments (refrigerated after opening) Pickles, pickle relish, olives (refrigerated after opening)	Raw or unpasteurized honey Herbal and non-traditional (health food store) nutritional supplements, Chinese herbs Brewers yeast, if eaten uncooked.



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Grocery Shopping:

- Check the “sell by” and “use by” dates.
- Check packaging date on fresh meats, poultry, and seafood. Check for off-odor and mold or insect contamination.
- Reject damaged, swollen, rusted, or deeply dented cans.
- Check that packaged and boxed foods are properly sealed.
- Select unblemished fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid delicatessen foods.
- In the bakery, avoid unrefrigerated cream- and custard-containing desserts and pastries.
- Avoid foods from self-select, bulk containers.
- Avoid yogurt and ice cream products dispensed from soft-serve machines.
- Avoid tasting free food samples.
- Reject cracked, unrefrigerated eggs.
- Purchase frozen and refrigerated foods last, especially during the summer month.
- Store groceries promptly; never leave food in a hot car.
- Read labels for information about ingredients/cooking style.

Dining Out:

- Eat early to avoid crowds.
- Select restaurants with a reputation for cleanliness.
- Check grades at restaurants; look for “A” with score in the 90’s.
- Ask that food be prepared fresh in fast food establishments.
- Request single-serving condiment packages; avoid self-serve bulk condiment containers.
- Avoid high risk food sources: garnishes, salad bars, delicatessens, buffets and smorgasbords, potlucks and sidewalk vendors.

Home Sanitation:

- Have available liquid or bar hand soap for hand washing.
- Wash hands with soap and warm, running water before and after every step in food preparation.
- Wash hands before eating, especially when eating hand-held foods.
- Wash hands after using the rest room, handling garbage, and touching pets.
- Use paper towels for drying hands.
- Use separate cutting boards (plastic, glass, and wooden are acceptable) for cooked foods and raw foods.
- Wash cutting boards after each use in hot, soapy water or in the dishwasher. Boards are sanitized weekly using a solution of 1 part household bleach to 10 parts water.
- Keep appliances free of food particles.



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- Check microwave oven, toaster, can openers, and blender and mixer blades. Blender blades and bottom should always be removed when washing the jar. Use bleach solution to sanitize these items.
- Keep counter and kitchen surfaces free of food particles
- Replace dishcloths and dish towels daily.
- Replace sponges at least weekly.
- Sanitize dishcloths and sponges daily in a bleach solution.
- Do not store food under the sink.
- Do not store chemicals and cleaning solutions near food supplies.
- Use liquid dish soap when washing dishes and pans.
- Clean spills in refrigerator or freezer immediately; keep shelves and doors sanitized.
- Maintain refrigerator temperature between 34°F and 40°F.
- Maintain freezer temperature to below 5°F.
- Store all food in covered containers after cooling. First, cool hot foods, uncovered, in the refrigerator; cover storage containers after cooling. Make sure that covers seal tightly.
- Discard eggs with cracked shells.
- Discard foods older than their “use by” expiration dates; discard all prepared foods after 72 hours (3 days).
- Discard entire food packages or containers with ANY mold present, including yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, fruit, vegetables, jelly, and bread or pastry products.
- Discard freezer-burned foods.
- Discard without tasting any bulging, leaking, or cracked cans, or those deeply indented in the seam area.
- Rotate food stock so older items are used first. Monitor expiration dates.
- Make sure food storage areas remain reasonably clean; no obvious insect or rodent contamination should be evident.
- If home-canned foods are used, review the processing procedure to be sure it was appropriate for the pH of the food, size of bottle, and elevation above sea level. Look for mold and seals. If you suspect a home-canned food may not have been processed properly, if the lid bulges, or if the food has any bad odor or unusual characteristics after opening, DISCARD IT.



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