Food safety advice for patients having chemotherapy

Nutrition and Dietetics
Patient Information Leaflet
Introduction

A common side effect of chemotherapy can be to reduce the body’s resistance to fight infections. It is therefore important to take extra care with the food you eat to minimise the risk of picking up a food-related infection.

The food safety information in this leaflet will help you to reduce your risk of picking up a food-related infection.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High risk foods to avoid</th>
<th>Safer alternatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unpasteurised milk</td>
<td>Pasteurised, sterilized, UHT milk, soya milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice cream from soft whip machines</td>
<td>Ice cream which is packaged e.g. blocks of ice cream, ice lollies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mould-ripened soft cheese (e.g. Brie, Camembert)</td>
<td>Processed cheese spread, cottage cheese, cream cheese (e.g. Dairylea, Kraft, Philadelphia), halloumi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese made with unpasteurised milk (e.g. feta, parmesan)</td>
<td>Pasteurised parmesan, pasteurised mozzarella, paneer made with pasteurised milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-veined cheese (e.g. Stilton, Danish Blue)</td>
<td>Vacuum-packed hard cheese (e.g. Cheddar, Double Gloucester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products or supplements including yoghurt which are described on the label as bio or probiotic* (e.g. Yakult, Actimel)</td>
<td>Any yoghurt that is not described on the label as bio or probiotic including live*, plain, Greek and fruit yoghurts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw eggs or undercooked eggs (including those in homemade mayonnaise, mousse, eggnog)</td>
<td>Hard boiled eggs. Shop-bought mayonnaise and other products made with pasteurised egg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw and undercooked meat, fish and poultry (e.g. meat which is still pink, sushi, smoked salmon)</td>
<td>Well-cooked meat, poultry and fish. Vacuum-packed cold meats such as ham or turkey. Tinned meat and fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw or lightly cooked shellfish (e.g. oysters, mussels, prawns)</td>
<td>Well-cooked shellfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh meat or fish pate</td>
<td>Pasteurised pate; and paste in tins or jars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takeaway foods particularly Chinese or Indian food with rice</td>
<td>Supermarket takeaways or fresh home-cooked food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still, bottled mineral water or filtered water</td>
<td>Freshly run tap water or carbonated water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The live bacteria used in making yoghurts are not harmful so yoghurt described as ‘live’ is safe when you are having chemotherapy. However the bacteria used in bio or probiotic foods cannot be guaranteed to be safe so it is best to avoid them.*
General food hygiene information

Shopping

- Always check use by or best before dates on packaging.
- Avoid buying food with damaged or broken packaging and fruit and vegetables which are bruised or going mouldy. Remember to wash and peel all fruit and vegetables.
- Avoid shops where raw and cooked meats are stored together. Where possible buy pre-packed deli items.
- Shop assistants should use utensils or gloves to handle food.
- Buy chilled or frozen foods last and take them home as quickly as possible. If you cannot get food home immediately a cool bag can help to keep food at the correct temperature.

Storage

- Your fridge should be kept between 0°C and 5°C. Do not overload the fridge or keep the door open as this will increase the temperature.
- Thaw meat and poultry in a fridge and not at room temperature.
- Raw or defrosting meat or fish should be kept at the bottom of the fridge in a covered container to prevent dripping or leaking into the fridge.
- Never refreeze thawed food.
- Eggs should be stored in the fridge.
- Store and use all opened foods according to manufacturers’ instructions. Any remaining tinned food should be emptied out into a clean container and covered with a lid or cling film.

Food preparation

- Always wash your hands well before preparing any food and wash them between handling raw and cooked foods.
- Change your tea towels and dishcloths regularly and let dishes air dry if possible.
- Use separate knives and chopping boards for preparing raw meat and poultry, cooked foods and vegetables.
- Wash and peel all fruit and vegetables.
Cooking

- Cook all food thoroughly following instructions on labels and in recipe books.
- Microwaves can be used for defrosting or reheating food according to manufacturers’ instructions but they are not recommended for cooking food.
- Rice should be eaten as soon as it is cooked. Do not eat it once it has gone cold and do not reheat it.

Eating out

- Choose freshly prepared foods from reputable outlets. Avoid salad bars, street vendors, market stalls and ice cream vans.

If you have any questions or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet please contact:

Georgina Unit 01384 244028 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)
This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 0730510

यदि आपको यह दस्तावेज अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो पेशेंट इनफरमेशन को-ऑर्डिनेटर को टेलीफ़ॉन नंबर 0800 0730510 पर पीछे करें।

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কো-অর্ডিনেটরের সাথে 0800 0730510 এই নম্বরে বোঝাপড়া করুন।

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