


Diet Guidelines for Immunosuppressed Patients



You may have decreased immune function because of chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy or from taking medications to suppress your immune system. This means that you are at increased risk of developing a food-related infection. The purpose of this diet is to help you avoid specific foods that are more likely to contain infection-causing organisms while allowing maximum healthy food choices. Choose foods from the “May eat” column and don’t choose foods in the “Do not eat” column. You may want to discuss the safety of these or other foods with your dietitian or care team.

In general, we recommend this diet for the following:

- **General oncology and cellular immunotherapy patients:** follow this diet when you have a low white blood cell count. A low white blood cell count refers to a neutrophil count less than 1000 mm³ or when chemotherapy is held due to low neutrophil count
- **Autologous transplant patients:** follow this diet during the first three months after chemotherapy or transplant.
- **Allogeneic transplant patients:** follow this diet until you are off all immunosuppressive therapy such as cyclosporine, prednisone, tacrolimus, Myfortic®, sirolimus, or MMF.

Guidelines





| Food groups | You may eat | Do not eat |
|---|--|--|
| Dairy  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pasteurized, grade “A” milk and milk products including eggnog, yogurt, ice cream, frozen yogurt, sherbet, ice cream bars, milkshakes, processed cheese slices and spreads, cream cheese, cottage cheese and ricotta cheese • Dry, refrigerated, or frozen pasteurized whipped topping • Commercially packaged hard and semi-soft cheeses such as cheddar, mozzarella, parmesan, Swiss, Monterey Jack, etc. • Cooked and pasteurized soft cheeses such as brie, goat, camembert, feta, farmer’s cheese. Though not completely risk free, the risk of contracting food borne illness from cooked soft cheeses is low. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-pasteurized or raw milk and milk products made from non-pasteurized or raw milk. • Cheeses from delicatessens • Cheese containing chili peppers or other uncooked vegetables • Cheeses with molds (such as blue, Stilton, Roquefort, gorgonzola) • Mexican-style soft cheese such as queso fresco, queso blanco (unless it is made with pasteurized milk and cooked) |

| Food groups | You may eat | Do not eat |
|---|--|---|
| (Dairy continued) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercially sterile ready-to-feed and liquid-concentrate infant formulas (avoid powdered infant formulas if a ready-to-feed or liquid concentrate alternative is available) | |
| Meat and meat substitutes  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All meats cooked to well done (see temperature guide attached) or canned meats (beef, pork, lamb, poultry, fish, shellfish, game, ham, bacon, sausage, hot dogs) Eggs cooked until both white and yolk are firm Pasteurized eggs and egg substitutes (such as Egg Beaters®), and powdered egg white (all can be used uncooked) Commercially packaged salami, bologna, hot dogs, ham and other luncheon meats, heated until steaming Canned and shelf-stable¹ smoked fish (refrigerate after opening) Pasteurized or cooked tofu² Refrigerated smoked seafood such as salmon or trout if cooked to 160°F or contained in a cooked dish or casserole | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw or undercooked meat, poultry, fish, game, tofu² Raw or undercooked eggs and non-pasteurized egg substitutes; no eggs over easy, soft-boiled eggs, or poached eggs. Meats and cold cuts from delicatessens Hard cured salami in natural wrap Uncooked refrigerated smoked, seafood such as salmon or trout labeled as “nova-style,” “lox,” “kippered,” “smoked” or “jerky” Pickled fish Tempe (tempeh) products |
| Fruits and nuts  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well washed³ raw and frozen fruit; foods containing well washed raw fruits Cooked, canned and frozen fruit Pasteurized juices and frozen juice concentrates Dried fruits Canned or bottled roasted nuts Shelled, roasted nuts and nuts in baked products Commercially packaged nut butters (such as peanut butter, almond butter, or soybean butter) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unwashed raw fruits Unroasted raw nuts Roasted nuts in the shell Non-pasteurized fruit and vegetable juices Fresh fruit salsa found in the grocery refrigerator case Non-pasteurized items containing raw fruits found in the grocery refrigerator case |

¹ Shelf-stable refers to unopened canned, bottled, or packaged food products that can be stored before opening at room temperature; container may require refrigeration after opening.

² Aseptically packaged, shelf-stable tofu and pasteurized tofu do not need to be boiled. Unpasteurized tofu must be cut into 1-inch cubes or smaller and boiled a minimum of five minutes in water or broth before eating or using in recipes.




³ Rinse under clean, running water before use, including produce that is to be cooked or peeled (such as bananas, oranges, and melon).

| Food groups | You may eat | Do not eat |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Entrees and soups</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All cooked entrees and soups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All miso products (such as miso soup and miso paste) |
| <p>Vegetables</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well washed³ raw and frozen vegetables All cooked fresh, frozen or canned vegetables, including potatoes Shelf-stable¹ bottled salsa (refrigerate after opening) Cooked vegetable sprouts (such as mung bean sprouts) Fresh, well washed³ herbs and dried herbs and spices (added to raw or cooked foods) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unwashed raw vegetables or herbs Fermented vegetables such as kimchi or sauerkraut Fresh, non-pasteurized vegetable salsa found in the grocery refrigerator case Non-pasteurized items containing raw vegetables found in the grocery refrigerator case All raw vegetable sprouts (alfalfa sprouts, clover sprouts, mung bean sprouts, all others) Salads from delicatessens and restaurants |
| <p>Bread, grain, and cereal products</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All breads, bagels, rolls, English muffins, muffins, pancakes, sweet rolls, waffles, French toast Potato chips, corn chips, tortilla chips, pretzels, popcorn Cooked grains and grain products, including pasta and rice All cereals, cooked and ready-to-eat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw (not baked or cooked) grain products (such as raw oats) |
| <p>Beverages</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boiled well water⁴ Tap water and ice made from tap water⁵ Commercially-bottled distilled, spring and natural waters⁶ All canned, bottled and powdered beverages Instant and brewed coffee and tea; cold brewed tea made with boiling water Herbal teas brewed from commercially-packaged tea bags Commercial nutritional supplements, both liquid and powdered | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unboiled well water Cold-brewed tea made with warm or cold water Non-pasteurized fruit and vegetable juices Mate tea Kombucha Wine, unpasteurized beer (Note: All alcoholic beverages should only be consumed following health care provider approval) |

⁴ Bring tap water to a rolling boil and boil for 15-20 minutes. Store boiled water in the refrigerator. Discard water not used within 48 hours (2 days).

⁵ Recommend using boiled or bottled water if using a water service other than city water service. Please see *Water Safety Guidelines* in “Food Safety Guidelines”.

⁶ See *Water Safety Guidelines* in “Food Safety Guidelines” for approved bottled water treatments.

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| (Beverages continued) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercially sterile ready-to-feed and liquid-concentrate infant formulas (avoid powdered infant formulas if a ready-to-feed or liquid concentrate alternative is available) | |
| Desserts  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refrigerated commercial and homemade cakes, pies, pastries and pudding Refrigerated cream-filled pastries Cookies, both homemade and commercially prepared Shelf-stable³ cream-filled cupcakes (such as Twinkies®, Ding Dongs®) and fruit pies (such as Poptarts® and Hostess® fruit pies) Canned and refrigerated puddings Ices, popsicles and similar products Candy, gum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unrefrigerated cream-filled pastry products (not shelf-stable³) |
| Fats  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetable oils and shortening Refrigerated lard, margarine, butter Commercial, shelf-stable³ mayonnaise and salad dressings including Blue Cheese and other cheese-based salad dressings (refrigerate after opening) Cooked gravy and sauces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh salad dressings (stored in the grocer's refrigerated case) containing raw eggs or cheeses listed as "Do not eat" under "Dairy". |
| Other  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial pasteurized Grade A honey⁷ Salt, granulated sugar, brown sugar Jam, jelly, syrups (refrigerate after opening) Ketchup (or "catsup"), mustard, BBQ sauce, soy sauce, other condiments (refrigerate after opening) Pickles, pickle relish, olives (refrigerate after opening) Vinegar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw honey; honey in the comb Herbal and nutrient supplement preparations (refer to Guidelines for Use of Herbal and Nutrient Supplements in Patient & Caregiver Resource Manual) Brewer's yeast, if uncooked |

⁷ Honey products are not allowed for any child less than one year of age and not allowed for children with SCIDS until 9 months posttransplant.

This education resource was intended to be given as a part of a nutrition consult by an SCCA dietitian. Questions? Ask an SCCA dietitian at nutrition@seattlecca.org.