

Neutropenic Diet

As a result of your illness and/or treatment your neutrophil levels (white blood cells) can drop below a normal range. This is known as neutropenia.

If you have neutropenia you are at increased risk of infections including those caused by food borne bacteria. It is therefore recommended that you follow a 'neutropenic diet' until your neutrophils return to normal and/or your Doctor or Dietitian tells you to return to your normal diet.

Most food borne illnesses occur as a result of contamination of food during handling, preparation and storage. For patients with neutropenia, specific bacteria in certain foods and drinks may also contribute to food borne infections. For this reason, some high risk foods should be restricted while you are neutropenic.

You should use the following leaflet as a guide to eating and drinking whilst neutropenic. The leaflet discusses important food hygiene practises and advises which foods to avoid during this time. It is important to bear in mind that the number of foods and drinks you need to restrict are small and it is unnecessary for you to restrict whole food groups.

Always alert your doctor or dietitian if you have any pre-existing food allergies or intolerances.

Dos and Don'ts

1. Going Shopping

Do.....	Don't....
Check 'use by' or 'best before' dates on all packaging	Buy food with damaged or broken packaging
Make sure you get chilled and frozen foods home as soon as possible. An insulated container or cool bag can help keep food at the correct temperature	Buy food from fridges, freezers or deli counters where raw and cooked meats are stored together
	Buy food from fridges and freezers that are overloaded or have a broken seal on the door as the food may not be cold enough

2. Storing Food

Do.....	Don't.....
Keep your fridge between 0°C and 5°C	Overload your fridge or freezer as this will affect the temperature
Keep your freezer below -18°C and check food is frozen solid when you remove it from the freezer	Refreeze thawed food
Store cooked food at the top of the fridge and raw meats at the bottom in a covered container	
Store eggs in the fridge	

3. Food Preparation

Do.....	Don't.....
Wash hands with soap and warm water before preparing food	Use a tea towel to dry hands, use kitchen roll or a separate towel for hand drying
Cover any cuts and grazes with a waterproof blue/coloured plaster	Allow pets near work surfaces, food, food storage areas and dishes/utensils
Wash tin, bottle and jar tops before opening	Use the same chopping board and utensils between raw and cooked foods to avoid cross-contamination
Decant drinks into a clean cup or glass	Drink straight from the container, bottle or can
Wash fruits and vegetables before eating	
Disinfect work surfaces and food storage areas regularly	
Make sure cloths, sponges and scourers are regularly disinfected, bleached or changed	

4. Eating Out

Do.....	Don't.....
Choose freshly prepared foods from reputable food outlets, cafes and restaurants	Choose foods from salad bars, ice cream vans, hot dog vans, market stalls and other street vendors
Make sure food is piping hot and thoroughly cooked before eating	Share foods from table tops (e.g. buffets, nuts and crisps in bars)

5. Cooking

Do.....	Don't.....
Thaw meat, poultry and fish in the fridge rather than at room temperature	Reheat cooked food
Pre-heat the oven to ensure food is cooked at the correct temperature	Shorten cooking times, always follow manufacturer's guidelines
Cook meat until juices run clear	Put hot food in the fridge, leave it to cool for an hour at room temperature first
Cook all food thoroughly until it is piping hot all the way through	
Use microwaves for defrosting as long as food is cooked right away	
Use microwaves to heat prepared foods according to manufacturer's instructions	

6. Staying in Hospital

Do.....	Don't.....
Make sure that any foods and snacks brought from home can be safely stored at room temperature. Follow manufacturer's guidance for storage.	Request foods to be brought in that require refrigeration or re-heating
Keep snacks in sealed, individual containers	Share foods and drinks with others on your ward
Use foods and drinks within the 'use by' date	Keep foods at your bedside for a long period of time.
Request items from the neutropenic menu.	Use the standard menus unless recommended by your doctor or dietitian
Foods to Choose	Foods to Avoid
Processed cheese; e.g. Philadelphia, Dairylea, mesh and halloumi	Soft ripened cheese; e.g. Brie, Camembert, goat's cheese, feta cheese, paneer and labnah
Vacuum-packed, pasteurised hard cheese; e.g. cheddar, Double Gloucester, Edam	Blue veined cheese; e.g. Stilton, Danish Blue, Roquefort Unpasteurised cheese; e.g. Parmesan
Pasteurised plain or fruit yogurts; e.g. thick and creamy or Greek yogurts. Pasteurised milk/custard Lassi	Probiotics, live or bio products; e.g. yogurts, probiotic containing supplements and drinks Unpasteurised milk and yogurts Cold cream, cream cakes

Foods to Choose	Foods to Avoid
Well cooked meat; e.g. hot roast meats straight from the oven Vacuum packed cold meats; e.g. turkey, ham, tinned meat	Raw/undercooked meat that is still pink; e.g. parma ham, rare/medium steak or duck breast, pate Smoked meat; e.g. smoked bacon
Tinned fish; e.g. tuna, mackerel Well-cooked fresh fish; e.g. cod, haddock, salmon	Sushi, shellfish, oysters, caviar Smoked fish; e.g. smoked salmon Tempe (tempeh) products
Hard boiled eggs, shop bought mayonnaise, ice cream and other products made with pasteurised egg Quorn and soya products	Raw eggs or undercooked eggs; e.g. homemade mayonnaise, homemade ice cream, mousse, egg-nog, meringue and hollandaise sauce Quiche, custard tarts
UHT or long life fruit juices in sealed jars, cartons or bottles	Unpasteurised fruit or vegetable juices
Good quality fruit and vegetables that are well cooked or peeled; e.g. peeled apple/banana, apple pie, jacket potato	Unpeeled fruit or vegetables; e.g. salad, stuffed vine leaves, fetoosh, tabouleh Damaged or over-ripe fruit or vegetables
Cooked dried fruit; e.g. fruit cake, flapjacks or cereal bars	Raw dried fruit and products containing these; e.g. raisins, muesli, Bombay mix, currant buns
Cooked herbs, pepper and spices added whilst cooking	Uncooked herbs, spices or pepper
Freshly run or sterilised water. Always allow the tap to run for around 5 seconds before filling your glass	Bottled mineral or spring water, water from coolers and water fountains, water from wells
Pasteurised or heat treated honey	Unpasteurised or 'farm fresh' honey and honeycomb Raw nuts; e.g. peanuts
Packets should be for personal use only, try to buy individual sized portions/packets.	Items from pick and mix, deli counters, unnecessarily large packets of food, universal jars, buffet foods

Meal Ideas

Breakfast Examples

Cereal with full cream milk
Full cream yogurt with bread and butter/toast
Porridge with syrup and full cream milk
Beans on toast
Bacon/sausage sandwich
Toast with cream cheese spread (e.g. Dairylea or Philadelphia)

Lunch Examples

Creamy soup and bread roll with butter
Cheese or meat sandwich
Tinned stew, macaroni cheese or ravioli with chips, mash or jacket potato
Omelette (add cheese if required) with bread and butter or toast
Jacket potato with cheese, beans or tuna mayonnaise (freshly made)

Evening Meal Examples

Oven-ready, boil in the bag or fresh meat/fish with chips and vegetables
Sausage, mash and vegetables with gravy
Vegetable pasta bake with cheddar cheese and garlic bread
Cottage pie, hotpot or stew with mash and vegetables

Snacks

Crisps
Roasted peanuts
Cheese on toast
Oatcakes and hummus (individual pot)
Rice pudding
Chocolate or sweet biscuits
Tinned puddings and pasteurised custard
Thick and creamy yogurt



If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on audio tape or disk and in other languages on request. Please contact:

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