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# Preventing Infection During Treatment

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Cancer and its treatment can weaken your immune system and leave you at risk for infections. Cancer-fighting drugs work by killing fast-growing cells in the body—both good and bad. These drugs kill cancer cells as well as healthy white blood cells.

When your white blood count is low, you are at the highest risk for infections. There are a number of things that can be done to reduce your exposure to bacteria and lower your chances of getting sick:

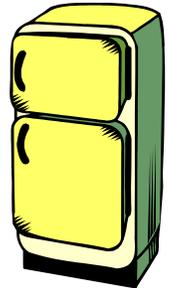
- Wash hands frequently in warm, soapy water for about 20 seconds:
  - before and after touching food, garbage, pets, face, hair, sores or cuts, other people.
  - before and after eating.
  - after using the restroom.
  - after coughing or sneezing.
- Good personal hygiene: shower or bathe daily.
- Brush your teeth and gums. Good care means 3 times daily.
- Do not share food, drink cups, utensils or other personal items, such as toothbrushes.
- Limit visitors, especially anyone with signs of illness or infection.
- Use gloves for gardening and household chores.



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## Recommendations for Handling Food:

- Buy food before the expiration dates and "sell by" dates on the food labels.
- Store foods at the right temperatures.
  - Refrigerator temperatures should be kept below 40° F.
  - Freezers should be kept below 0° F.



- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Use separate cutting boards for meats and raw fruits or vegetables.



- Thaw foods in the refrigerator or microwave. Never thaw foods at room temperature. Cook foods immediately after thawing.
- Refrigerate all leftovers within 2 hours of cooking and eat them within 24 hours.
- Cook meat and eggs all the way through to kill any germs. Avoid raw and undercooked foods.
- Keep hot food hot (above 140°F) and cold food cold (below 40°F).
- Substitute frozen pasteurized eggs or powdered egg whites for raw eggs in recipes such as eggnog, Caesar salad dressing and meringues.
- Clean cooking utensils and food preparation surfaces with warm, soapy water and then sanitize with a solution of 1 tablespoon bleach to 4 cups warm water. Let the solution sit for about 2 minutes and then rinse with hot, clean water.

