

## Free Prescriptions

All cancer patients undergoing treatment for cancer, the effects of cancer or the effects of cancer treatment can apply for an exemption certificate for a free prescription from their GP.

### How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand rub (special gel) available at the main entrance of the hospital and at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward or hospital. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand rub. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

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# Food safety for people who are receiving chemotherapy

Practical tips and advice at a time when you may be more prone to infections

### Patient information leaflet

If you require a translation or an alternative format of this leaflet please ask for assistance

Issued by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

## Food safety during chemotherapy

Chemotherapy may make you more prone to develop infections, partly because the neutrophils (which normally fight infection) will be low and also because the gut lining that normally acts as a barrier between the bacteria and the bloodstream can be damaged. It is therefore important to be careful with the foods that you eat to reduce the risk of food poisoning. Following the guidelines below will help you to minimise any risk:

### Shopping

- Check 'use by dates' and always use food within the recommended period.
- Avoid broken packaging.
- Take chilled and frozen foods home quickly and put away at once. If possible, use a cool box to transport cold foods.
- Avoid bruised or damaged fruits and vegetables.
- It is safer to buy pre-packaged cheese and cold meats rather than from the delicatessen.

### Storage

- Keep the coldest part of your fridge between 0-5°C and your freezer below -18°C.
- Cool cooked food quickly and cover before storing in fridge or freezer.
- Store raw and cooked food separately, with raw food at the bottom.
- Do not refreeze food once it has started to thaw, raw food is ok to refreeze once it has been cooked.
- Always store your eggs in the fridge.

The main source of Vitamin D is sunlight, and although it is found in some foods (e.g. oily fish, red meat, liver, egg yolks, fortified cereals and spreads), it is difficult to get enough Vitamin D from diet alone.

All adults should consider taking a daily supplement of 10micrograms of Vitamin D, especially during autumn and winter. Some at risk groups, people over 65, people with darker skin tones, people who cover their skin outside should consider taking a daily supplement of 10mcg Vitamin D all year round.

If you wish to take a vitamin and mineral supplement to ensure you are getting all of the nutrients you need, choose a general multi-vitamin and mineral supplement providing at least 15 nutrients less than 150% of the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA).

## Common side effects of chemotherapy

Side effects are common during chemotherapy, eg fatigue, loss of appetite, taste changes, dry/sore mouth, nausea and vomiting and bowel changes (constipation or diarrhoea). They can all impact on your nutritional intake. For further information on how to manage these please ask for our leaflet *Common nutritional problems and cancer* (CISS-24).

## Weight loss during chemotherapy

Small weight changes may occur as a result of chemotherapy and do not need to cause you concern. Significant weight loss may affect your ability to tolerate treatment and can also lead to muscle loss, in turn resulting in decreased strength, weakness and fatigue. If you have lost a lot of weight or are struggling with eating, please ask your nurse for further guidance which may prompt a referral to the Macmillan Specialist Dietitians.

## Eating well during chemotherapy

It is important to maintain a nutritious and well-balanced diet. This will help you to cope with any side-effects you may experience during treatment, prevent unintentional weight loss, reduce the risk of infections and help with recovery.

Eating well means having a varied and well balanced diet that will provide your body all the nutrients it needs to function well. For more details ask for our booklet *Healthy Eating for people with Cancer* (CISS-26). If you are struggling to maintain a healthy weight or have a poor appetite, please ask for a copy of *“Eating Well with a small appetite”* (CISS-25).

### Alternative Diets

Some ‘complementary’ or ‘alternative’ diets claim to cure or control cancer using a diet and many patients are unsure whether to follow these or not.

If you are thinking of following any of these diets, please discuss it with your health professional first.

To date there is no scientific evidence to support claims made by alternative diets. These diets are potentially harmful because they are often low in energy (calories) and protein and/or tend to be bulky, making them very filling. Therefore they can cause weight loss in people who are already experiencing problems eating due to their cancer treatment.

### Dietary Supplements

Most people when they are well are able to get all of the nutrients that they need from a balanced and varied diet. The exception to this is Vitamin D.

### Food preparation

- Always wash your hands thoroughly before and after preparing food.
- Keep your kitchen clean – wash worktops using an antibacterial spray and make sure that all sponges, dishcloths and dishtowels are cleaned frequently.
- To avoid cross-contamination, always use different chopping boards for raw and cooked food. Clean utensils between handling raw and cooked food.
- Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly under running water.

### Cooking

- Ensure that food is cooked thoroughly and piping hot throughout.
- Meat should be cooked until the juices run clear.
- Always follow the instructions on packaged food.
- Serve hot foods as soon as possible after preparation

### Reheating foods

- Cool left-overs quickly (ideally within one hour of cooking), then cover and store in fridge or freezer.
- Eat any left-overs within 24hours and make sure that they are heated until piping hot throughout when served.
- Do not reheat food more than once.
- Do not reheat cooked rice.

Some foods are more likely to cause food poisoning and should be avoided whilst you are having chemotherapy and for 14 days after completing the last cycle of chemotherapy. See table on page 3 and 4 for foods to avoid and suitable alternatives.

**If you have any questions or queries do not hesitate to ask a member of staff.**

## High risk foods to avoid and suitable alternatives

Avoid	Alternatives
All unpasteurised dairy products eg milk sold on local farms.	Any pasteurised milk, soya milk, jersey milk, UHT milk or nut milks.
Cheeses made with unpasteurised milk eg parmesan. Homemade/deli paneer and labnah. Mould-ripened cheeses eg camembert, brie, goat's cheese. Blue veined cheeses eg Danish blue and stilton.	Cheeses made with pasteurised milk, (feta, mozzarella, cottage cheese). Processed cheese (eg Dairylea, Kraft, Philadelphia), halloumi. Pasteurised parmesan. Paneer made with pasteurised milk. Vacuum-packed pasteurised and hard cheeses eg cheddar and edam.
Raw or lightly cooked shellfish	Well cooked shellfish eg prawn curry
Raw/undercooked meat, poultry or fish eg meat which is still pink, sushi, caviar and oysters. Smoked meats eg salami and parma ham. Avoid smoked salmon unless eaten directly from a freshly opened packet.	Well cooked meat, poultry and fish, tinned meat and fish. Vacuum-packed cold meats such as turkey and ham stored below 3°C and eaten following the manufacturer's instructions. Vacuum packed fish eaten straight from a new packet. This includes smoked salmon.
Raw or undercooked eggs eg homemade mayonnaise, homemade icecream, mousse, eggnog, meringue, hollandaise sauce and béarnaise. Any dressing containing raw eggs eg home/restaurant made Caesar salad dressing.	Hard boiled eggs, shop-brought mayonnaise and other products made with pasteurised egg.
Probiotic or 'bio' foods, drink or supplements eg Yakult, Actimel, ProViva. Yogurt which is described on the label as 'bio' or 'probiotic' eg Activia or Yeo Valley	Any yogurt that does not describe itself as bio or probiotic including live, plain, Greek and fruit yogurts.*
Meat pâté, vegetable pâté, fish pâté	Pasteurised pâté and paste in tins or jars.

\* The live bacteria used in making yogurts are not harmful. So yogurt described as "live" is safe, however, the bacteria used in bio or probiotic foods cannot be guaranteed as safe.