

Food safety guidance during Neutropenia

When you are having chemotherapy or receiving stem cell transplant treatment, you may be at a higher risk of infection due to your white cell count being low. At this time it is important to be careful about the foods that you eat, to avoid getting a food related infection.

Some haematology units may recommend following a neutropenic diet, which means avoiding foods like raw unpeeled fruit and vegetables, dried fruit, fresh nuts and uncooked herbs and spices. However, there is little evidence to suggest that this reduces the risk of infection. In line with our tertiary centre (Oxford), we have decided not to recommend this stricter diet in Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust, as this may help you to maintain your nutrition during treatment.

Choosing and storing foods appropriately during your stay in hospital

- **All** hot and cold food options on the hospital menu are suitable choices
- You are allowed to choose two hot meals per day if you prefer
- All fresh consumables e.g. yoghurts or pre-packed fruit salad pots must be eaten within 24 hours once they have been opened
- Bottled supplement drinks should be consumed within 4 hours of opening or refrigerated for up to 24 hours then discarded. Powdered supplements prepared on the ward should be consumed within 4 hours, any drink not consumed should be discarded
- Dried foods i.e. biscuits, crackers, nuts should be kept in an airtight container or tightly wrapped once opened
- Any ready meals brought in should be reheated following the manufacturer's instructions and be piping hot throughout before consumption
- Avoid any 'take-aways' apart from fish and chips and well-cooked pizza
- Not all foods brought into the ward from outside the hospital may be suitable, please ask the ward staff and see the following booklet for more detailed information:

“Food safety for people receiving Systemic Anti-Cancer Treatment (SACT)”
Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust leaflet CISS-58