

## Production

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## PREVENTING FOOD POISONING

### PATIENT GUIDE



RÉSEAU DE CANCÉROLOGIE DE LA MONTÉRÉGIE

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## Conclusion

We hope this guide to buying, preparing and cooking foods safely will help you whip up mouth-watering meals.

Contact your team's nurse or nutritionist if you have any questions or need more information.

Type of food	Foods to avoid	Safer alternatives
Fruit juice	Unpasteurized fruit juice.	Unpasteurized fruit juice brought to a rolling boil and cooled. Pasteurized fruit juice.
Sprouts	Raw sprouts such as alfalfa, clover, radish and mung bean.	Thoroughly cooked sprouts.

### Others

Also avoid:

- meals prepared with leftover food;
- homemade pickles and preserves;
- bulk foods and foods prepared in the grocery store:
  - ✓ spices and aromatics;
  - ✓ nuts and grains;
  - ✓ cheeses;
  - ✓ pickles;
  - ✓ ready-to-eat salads made with rice, pasta, cabbage, potatoes or fruit;
  - ✓ deli meats sold at the counter.
- unpasteurized honey;
- commercial cream-filled pastries and pies;
- ice cream from dairy bars, soft ice cream, and homemade ice cream made with raw eggs;
- foods enriched with active or probiotic cultures (e.g., yogurt with probiotics).

If you have any doubts about the water quality, boil the water for 5 minutes.

### Introduction

Chemotherapy treatments can weaken your immune system, putting you at increased risk of infection and making you more vulnerable to certain bacteria in the environment that are usually harmless. That's why it's important that you be careful of food-borne infections.

Follow the tips and advice on the next few pages to reduce your risk of getting food poisoning. We're always available to give you advice on how best to follow these recommendations and to make your healthcare experience during chemotherapy treatments as comfortable as possible.

### Buying food

Inspect food packaging carefully. Don't buy anything in a package or container that's damaged, dented or leaking.

### Fresh produce

Check the expiry dates on food labels. Only buy prepared foods dated the same day or the day before. Avoid buying fruits and vegetables that are overripe or bruised.

### Refrigerated and frozen food

At the grocery store, shop for refrigerated and frozen food last. Refrigerate or freeze them within one hour. Do not leave perishable food in the trunk of the car as this can cause bacteria to grow.

To prevent bacteria from raw food spreading to ready-to-eat food, keep raw meat, poultry, fish and seafood separate from the other items in your shopping cart. Place them in individual plastic bags. Pack them separate from other food (e.g., in your reusable shopping bags).

If you use reusable shopping bags or bins, reserve one just for raw meat, poultry, fish and seafood. Label it and wash it often.

## Preparing food

### Handwashing

Washing your hands regularly with soap and hot water decreases the risk of contamination. It is important that you wash your hands:

- before and after handling raw meat, poultry, fish or seafood;
- after going to the bathroom;
- after touching a pet;
- after changing a diaper.

Even if you wear gloves when preparing food, it's important to wash your hands regularly.

If you have a cut or open wound on your hands, cover it with a waterproof bandage, available at your pharmacy.

Your kitchen rags and dishcloths are often a source of contamination. Never use dirty rags or dishcloths. Always use clean cloths or paper towels.

After preparing food, wash your counters and dishes with soap and hot water. Use the following solution to disinfect them: 5 ml (1 tsp.) of bleach in 750 ml (3 cups) of water (mixed in a spray bottle). Spray and leave on for a few minutes. Rinse thoroughly and leave to air dry or wipe dry with a clean cloth.

Wash the tops of aluminium cans with soap and hot water. Rinse thoroughly and dry. Don't forget to wash your can opener with soap and hot water, too.

Avoid cross-contamination (contact between raw and cooked food). Make sure the juices in the package don't drip on other food or kitchen equipment. Store raw and cooked food separately and use different utensils and dishes for each one.

Fresh fruit and vegetables are allowed, but make sure you wash them well before eating or cooking them. Use a food brush for fruit and vegetables with a **firm skin** (e.g., carrots,

Type of food	Foods to avoid	Safer alternatives
Eggs and egg products	Raw or lightly cooked eggs or egg products, including salad dressings, cookie dough or cake batter, sauces and drinks such as homemade eggnog.	Egg dishes thoroughly cooked to a safe internal temperature. Eggs should be cooked until the yolk is firm.  Pasteurized liquid egg. Homemade eggnog must be heated to 71°C (160°F).
Fish and seafood	Raw oysters, clams and mussels.	Oysters, clams and mussels cooked until the shell opens.
	Raw fish and seafood. Sushi.	Fish and seafood cooked to a safe internal temperature of 74°C (165°F).
	Refrigerated smoked fish and seafood.	Fish and seafood in cans that do not require refrigeration until after opening.
Meat and poultry	Raw or undercooked meat or poultry such as steak tartare.	Meat and poultry cooked to a safe internal temperature. (see the table on p. 6).

Type of food	Foods to avoid	Safer alternatives
Deli meats	Non-cured deli meats such as bologna, roast beef and turkey breast.	Cured and salted deli meats such as salami and pepperoni. Non-cured deli meats heated throughout to steaming hot.
Dairy products	Raw or unpasteurized dairy products, including soft or semi-soft cheeses such as Brie, Camembert and blue cheeses.	Pasteurized dairy products and firm cheeses such as Colby, cheddar, Swiss and Parmesan.
Hot dogs	Hot dogs straight from the package without further heating.	Hot dogs thoroughly cooked to a safe internal temperature. The middle of the hot dog should be steaming hot or 74°C (165°F).
Pâtés and meat spreads	Refrigerated pâtés and meat spreads.	Pâtés and meat spreads sold in cans or that do not require refrigeration until after opening.

potatoes, melons, squash, etc.). Do not soak them in the sink. Fruit and vegetable washes are not recommended.

### Cooking food

Avoid cooking meat, poultry, fish and seafood, and fresh or frozen prepared meals in the microwave. Use a conventional oven to ensure uniform cooking. However, you can use a microwave to reheat your meals.

Here is a recommended temperature guide to make sure meat is cooked properly.

Beef, veal, lamb	medium rare	63°C (145°F)
	medium	71°C (160°F)
	well done	77°C (170°F)
Minced meat and meat mixtures (hamburgers, sausages, meatballs, meatloaf, casseroles, etc.)	beef, veal, lamb and pork	71°C (160°F)
	poultry	74°C (165°F)
Pork (whole cuts and pieces)		71°C (160°F)
Poultry (chicken, turkey, duck, etc.)	whole	85°C (185°F)
	pieces	74°C (165°F)
Egg dishes		74°C (165°F)
Other (hot dogs, stuffing, leftovers, seafood, etc).		74°C (165°F)

Always add herbs, spices, pepper and other seasonings (soy sauce, herb blends) during cooking and not immediately before serving.

After cooking, cool food quickly in small, shallow, airtight containers. Avoid using large containers, which take much longer to cool. Refrigerate leftovers as soon as possible or within two hours of cooking. After this time, the amount of bacteria in food can reach dangerous levels. It's impossible to

determine if food is safe just by smelling or tasting it. If in doubt, throw it out!

Avoid the danger zone between 4°C and 60°C; most bacteria will grow rapidly in this temperature range.

### Storing food

When storing raw meat, poultry and fish, make sure they are not touching other food (e.g., in the same container). Store them on the bottom shelf of your refrigerator to prevent the juices from dripping on other food.

Store fresh cut fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator. Refrigerate condiments (e.g., mayonnaise, relish, mustard, ketchup, etc.) after opening.

Label frozen food with the item name and freezing date.

### In case of a power failure

- Products that are still frozen solid can be refrozen.
- Products that are still cold to the touch must be cooked immediately.

Always defrost meat and other perishable food in the refrigerator, microwave, or cold water. If you defrost food in the microwave, cook it right away. Do not refreeze food.

Avoid storing perishable food (eggs, milk) on the refrigerator door, where the temperature can vary.

### Shelf life of food

The temperature in the refrigerator must be below 4°C (40°F) and below -18°C (0°F) in the freezer.

For more information about the shelf life of food, visit <https://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Publications/Thermoguide.pdf>

### At the restaurant

For your protection, we recommend that you avoid ordering takeout, since it's often impossible to guarantee that the restaurant complies with food hygiene and safety rules.

When eating at a restaurant, order your food well done and your drinks in a can or bottle. Avoid hot and cold buffets, where food is handled by several people. The serving temperature can also be difficult to control. Avoid fast food restaurants too, because of the temperature variations and the number of people handling the food.

### Alternatives

Eating certain foods, such as the ones listed on the following pages, can be riskier for people with a weakened immune system because of the food production methods, conditions and shelf life.

If you have a weakened immune system, you can reduce your risk of getting food poisoning by avoiding certain types of food and choosing safer alternatives.