

# EATSAFE

FOR HIGH-RISK CANADIANS



## A GUIDE FOR PEOPLE UNDERGOING CANCER TREATMENT

When you're receiving treatment for cancer, it's important to follow a healthy diet to make sure you get the nutrients you need. Chemotherapy and radiation treatments as well as medications your doctor may have recommended as part of your treatment, can make you more vulnerable to foodborne illness, so it's important to practice good food safety and avoid eating foods that can place you at higher risk.

Although Canada has one of the best food safety systems in the world, there are still 11 to 13 million cases of foodborne illness across the country each year. That means your ability to stay healthy depends on **what** food you eat, how well you **store** your food, and how carefully you **prepare** your meals.

When you undergo cancer treatment:

- Your immune system is less able to clear infection and other foreign agents from your body.
- You're more likely to stay sick for longer, enter hospital, or even die because of a foodborne illness.
- With a weaker immune system, you have to be more careful about handling, preparing, and eating food.

Canada has stringent regulations in place to make sure the food we buy is free of contamination and safe to eat. Any business that produces or sells food—from farmers and food processors to supermarkets, delis, butchers, and restaurants—must meet these high standards.

As the consumer, once you buy a food product, **you** are the next link in the chain that helps protect the safety of the food you are eating. This fact sheet and associated food safety website will give you the information you need to help you choose the right foods, whether at home or on the go, and on how to prepare them at home and store them safely.



### Higher-Risk Foods

If you're undergoing cancer treatment, some foods are riskier for you to eat because of the way they're made and the conditions in which they're stored. You should avoid these foods, since they pose a higher risk of making you sick:

- Raw finfish and shellfish, including oysters, clams, mussels, and scallops
- Raw or unpasteurized cow or goat milk, or foods made from unpasteurized milk
- Soft cheeses like feta, Brie, Camembert, and queso blanco fresco
- Hot dogs straight from the package without further heating
- Non-dried deli meats, such as bologna, roast beef, and turkey breast unless heated to steaming hot
- Raw or lightly cooked egg or egg products, including salad dressings, cookie or cake batters, sauces, and beverages like home-made eggnog
- Raw meat or undercooked poultry
- Raw sprouts like alfalfa, clover, radish, and mung beans
- Unpasteurized fruit juices and ciders

### Four Steps to Food Safety at Home

Here are four simple but important steps you can take to reduce your risk of foodborne illness when you prepare meals at home:

1. **Clean:** Keep cooking areas, utensils, towels, and sponges free of the germs that can cause disease. Wash fruits and vegetables carefully.
2. **Separate:** Avoid contaminating clean food, utensils, or countertops by handling food in a way that carries harmful bacteria from one surface to another.
3. **Cook:** Always cook your food to the proper temperature to kill bacteria. Always cook raw meat, poultry, fish, and seafood to a safe internal temperature.
4. **Chill:** Keep cold food cold and hot food hot to prevent your food from reaching the "temperature danger zone" (between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F)). At room temperature, bacteria in food can double every 20 minutes.

### Find out more...

**EAT SAFE** is a food safety website produced by the Canadian Public Health Association, with support from Maple Leaf Foods Inc., especially for people who are at higher risk for foodborne illness. It lists the steps you can take to eat safely and healthily while you undergo cancer treatment. You can visit the site at: [foodsafety.cpha.ca](http://foodsafety.cpha.ca)

