

# Food and Water Safety

Information and advice for patients with HIV

## *Nutrition and Dietetics*

Food and water can carry germs that can cause illness and serious infection, particularly in people who have a CD4 cell count below 200. These germs include salmonella, campylobacter, listeria and cryptosporidium. They can cause diarrhoea, upset stomach, vomiting, stomach cramps, fever, headaches, muscle pain and blood stream infections.

The following advice will help you reduce your risk of becoming ill from germs in food and water.

### **Water safety**

#### **Tap water**

Tap water in the UK is generally safe to drink but if you have a very low CD4 cell count you need to take extra steps to ensure you don't get an infection from it. The safest option is to boil your drinking water for at least 1 minute, allow it to cool and then store it in the fridge for up to 24 hours in a clean bottle or covered jug. It can then be used for drinking, brushing teeth, washing fruit and vegetables and for making ice.

#### **Bottled water**

Bottled water is best avoided as it is not covered by the same strict regulations as tap water. It cannot be guaranteed to be safe from bacteria and water borne infections.

#### **Other drinks**

Pasteurised fruit juice, bottled or canned soft drinks and other drinks made with boiled water are safe to drink.

#### **Water filters**

Jug filters are not recommended as they often harbour potentially harmful bacteria. Water filters attached to your water mains (usually located under the sink) do remove waterborne infections and protect against cryptosporidiosis but are very expensive.

#### **Water abroad**

Whilst abroad, the safest option is to take a travel kettle and boil your water. Only use ice made from boiled water.

#### **Other advice**

Swimming in the sea or in rivers is also not advisable for people with compromised immune systems. It is also important to wash your hands after going to the toilet, changing a nappy and gardening to avoid infections.

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### **Food safety**

The following foods are high risk foods and should be avoided:

- Raw meat and raw fish
- Undercooked chicken, poultry or pork
- Pate
- Unpasteurised and blue cheeses such as Brie, Stilton, Feta and Camembert
- Unpasteurised milk and yoghurt
- Live yoghurts and probiotic drinks and supplements.
- Raw eggs and foods that may contain raw eggs such as hollandaise sauce, homemade mayonnaise, ice cream, mousse, salad dressing and royal icing
- Unpackaged ready-to-eat cold meats from deli counters and sandwich bars
- Ready-to-eat cold chicken
- Pre-packaged/pre-prepared salads and salads from salad bars
- Cooked prawns
- Soft-serve ice cream
- Pick and mix sweets

Following general advice about the safe preparation, cooking and storage of food can also help reduce your risk of getting ill from germs in the food:

1. Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly in cooled boiled water.
2. Keep food preparation boards and surfaces clean.
3. Make sure that uncooked food is stored and prepared separately from cooked food.
4. After shopping, put all cold and frozen food into the fridge and freezer as soon as possible. Do not leave it sitting in the car as keeping cold or frozen food out for even a few hours can give germs a chance to grow.
5. Avoid food that is mouldy or has passed its sell-by date and eggs that are cracked.
6. Make sure that food is thoroughly reheated if it has already been cooked.
7. Cooked stews should be kept in the fridge and eaten within 2 days. Portions should be frozen if you wish to keep them for longer.

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### Further information

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the dietitian:

Dietitian name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone no.: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk) or [www.swbhengage.com](http://www.swbhengage.com), or follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

Blackwell Publishing, 'Nutrition and HIV', edited by Vivian Pribram, 2011

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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Incorporating City, Sandwell and Rowley Regis Hospitals  
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ML3795  
Issue Date: January 2013  
Review Date: January 2015