

# Discharge Instructions: Eating a Low-Bacteria Diet



Your healthcare provider has prescribed a low-bacteria diet for you. The purpose of this diet is to help you eat healthy foods with low amounts of bacteria (germs). This can decrease your risk of getting an infection. A low-bacteria diet is prescribed when your immune system is not working well because of illness or medical treatment. All food on a low-bacteria diet is cooked or prepared to reduce the amount of bacteria in the food. Here are some guidelines to follow.

## General guidelines

- Keep raw meat away from other food. Wash your hands after handling raw meat.
- Cook all fish, poultry, and meat items until they are well done.
- Throw away leftovers that have been refrigerated for more than 3 days.
- Never eat food that doesn't smell good or that has mold on it.
- Check for dented or bulging food cans, torn boxes, or leaky plastic wrappers. Don't eat food from these containers.
- Throw away food if the expiration date has passed.
- Don't eat at buffets or salad bars. Don't eat food from deli counters, steam tables, street vendors, or other places where food sits for long periods. Don't eat food that has been kept under warming lights.
- Don't sample food at grocery stores. Don't buy or eat food from containers that other people have shared.
- Don't take food from a container with a spoon, put it in your mouth, and put it back into the container. This will introduce bacteria into the container.
- Don't eat meals prepared and given to you by friends or neighbors because you don't know if they were prepared safely or not.
- Don't drink well water that has not been tested.
- Don't drink alcohol unless your healthcare provider says it's OK.

## Cleaning to reduce bacteria

- Keep your hands clean. Wash them with soap and clean, running water. Be sure to rinse off the soap before handling food or liquids.
- Wipe up spills right away. You can use a bleach solution (1 tbsp bleach in a quart of warm water) to clean your kitchen. Keep all surfaces that may touch food as clean as possible.
- Every day, replace dish towels with clean ones or use disposable paper towels.
- Before opening cans and bottles, wash the outside with soap and warm water.
- Wash your hands and fruits, such as oranges and bananas, before preparing them. With melons, peel the melon first, then rinse it off before you eat it.

## Eating hot foods

- Heat hot food at 165°F (74°C) or higher.
- Keep your hot food hot until you eat it. A minimum temperature of 140°F (60°C) is recommended. This will keep bacteria from growing in your food.

## Eating cold foods

- Keep cold food and liquids cold, at 40°F (4°C) or lower, until you eat or drink them.
- Eat foods you've taken out of the refrigerator within 2 hours.
- Don't leave dairy products or mayonnaise out of the refrigerator for more than 30 to 60 minutes (less on warm days).
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator. Don't thaw them at room temperature.

## Selecting foods

Here are some guidelines for selecting different types of foods.

### Protein

- Select from the following foods: well-cooked chicken, fish, beef, or pork; cooked dried beans, peas, or lentils; boiled, poached, or scrambled eggs; cottage cheese; American cheese or other cheese made from pasteurized milk; peanut butter from a tightly sealed container.
- Don't have these foods: aged or ripened cheeses, such as blue, feta, or brie; eggs with cracked shells or eggs that are not cooked all the way; nuts or trail mix; pickled fish; raw eggs or homemade eggnog; raw fish, lox, or sushi; raw, rare, or undercooked meats and poultry; raw or fresh-ground peanut butter; or tofu, tempeh, or other aged soy foods, such as miso.

### Dairy foods

- Select pasteurized milk, pasteurized yogurt, ice cream or frozen yogurt, pudding, or custard.
- Don't have raw or farm-fresh milk, raw yogurt, raw milk cheese, or raw milk ice cream. Don't eat aged or ripened cheeses.

### Breads, grains, and starches

- Select the following foods, prepared and packaged: bread, rolls, muffins, hot dog or hamburger buns; cooked rice or pasta; dry cereal; cooked cereal; mashed potatoes; baked potatoes; saltine crackers; graham crackers; popcorn; potato or corn chips.
- Don't have granola cereals with nuts or dried fruit. Don't eat breads or muffins with nuts or dried fruit.

### Vegetables

- Select cooked vegetables, canned vegetables, canned vegetable juice, and canned tomato sauce or paste.
- Fresh vegetables should be washed under running water before you cut or peel them, even vegetables grown at home or bought from a store or farmers' market. Washing vegetables with soap, detergent, or commercial produce wash is not recommended. Scrub the skins of firm produce, such as squash, with a clean produce brush. After washing, dry the vegetables with a clean cloth towel or paper towel to reduce any bacteria that might remain on the surface.

- Don't eat pickled vegetables, such as olives, onions, pickles, or pickled cabbage; or raw sprouts, freshly squeezed vegetable juices, commercially prepared salads, and salsas.

## Fruit

- Select canned fruit or applesauce; canned fruit juice or nectar.
- Fresh fruits should be washed under running water before you cut or peel them, even fruit grown at home or bought from a store or farmers' market. Washing fruits with soap, detergent, or commercial produce wash is not recommended. Scrub the skins of firm fruits, such as melons, with a clean produce brush. After washing, dry the fruit with a clean cloth towel or paper towel to reduce any bacteria that might remain on the surface.
- Don't drink raw juices made from fresh fruits.

## Fats

- Select packaged margarine or butter, packaged salad dressing, and packaged cream cheese.
- Don't use dressings made from raw or farm-fresh raw dairy products.

## Desserts

- Select gelatin desserts and packaged cookies.
- Don't eat desserts with coconut, raw unwashed fruits, raw nuts, and raw honey. Also don't have constructed desserts. These are handled a lot when they're made.

## Follow-up

Make a follow-up appointment as directed by our staff.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of the following occur:

- Fever above 100.4° F ( 38°C ) or shaking chills
- Shortness of breath
- Severe headache
- Confusion
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Loss of consciousness
- Diarrhea that does not go away after 2 loose stools
- Pain or cramping in the stomach
- Any chest pain

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