

Infection Precautions for Immunosuppressed Individuals

What does immunosuppressed mean?

Immunosuppressed (also known as immunocompromised) means that your body's immune system or ability to fight off infection may be impaired or not working as effectively.

Who is considered immunosuppressed?

The following may be considered immunocompromised and are at higher risk for infections:

- Individuals who are elderly (>60 years of age)
- Individuals with chronic disease, such as diabetes
- Individuals being treated long-term with steroid medications, such as people with autoimmune disorders, asthma, or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Patients undergoing treatments for any type of cancer, leukemia or lymphoma
- Individuals undergoing regular hemodialysis for kidney disease
- Individuals who have tested positive for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- Individuals who have undergone solid organ (e.g., kidney, liver) or bone marrow transplantation
- Individuals with liver disease or other conditions associated with heavy alcohol intake

How do I avoid getting ill while immunosuppressed?

While not all illness may be preventable, the following measures can help to keep you and those around you safer from some of the more common preventable infections:

General Hygiene

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. Be sure to wash your hands before eating and before touching your face or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth, etc.).
- It is particularly important to wash your hands:
 - After using the bathroom
 - After touching raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables
 - Before preparing food and before eating
 - After gardening or touching dirt
 - After handling pets
 - After being around others who are ill
 - After changing diapers
- Try to avoid direct contact with a person having a fever, flu, or other infection.
- Brush your teeth twice each day. Consider using a softer toothbrush to ease any gum tenderness or sensitivity.
- Be careful when getting a manicure or pedicure. Choose a service establishment that is careful with hygiene.
- Check with your doctor before wading, playing, or swimming in ponds, lakes, and rivers or using a hot tub.
- Take care of your feet by wearing comfortable shoes that will provide protection against cuts, scrapes, and other injury.
- Do not share shavers or razors with another person.



Hand washing steps:

1. Use soap and warm running water.
2. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds; use a nail brush.
3. Wash all surfaces:
 - Between fingers
 - Under fingernails
 - Back of hands
 - Wrists
4. Rinse well and dry hands with a clean paper towel.

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Immunocompromised (continued)

Foods to Avoid:

- Raw milk and raw milk products
- Unpasteurized juices
- Soft cheeses such as Queso Fresco, camembert, brie, blue-veined cheeses
- Refrigerated smoked fish
- Refrigerated pates and meat spreads
- Undercooked eggs or egg products, such as over easy, raw cookie dough, etc.
- Raw salad sprouts
- Any food that contains mold (including blue cheese, including that in salad dressings)
- Any outdated food items
- Raw fish, seafood, poultry, or meat

Food Safety:

- Deli meats and hot dogs must be heated to a minimum temperature of 140°F
- Cook meats, fish and eggs until well done. Poultry must be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F or juices run clear
- Avoid any cooked foods that have been at room temperature for 2 hours or more
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly before preparing or consuming, including melons and avocados; thoroughly wash the exterior surfaces of all produce before cutting through the peel
- Maintain the internal temperature of your refrigerator at 41°F or less, and avoid overpacking with too much food
- Use separate cutting boards, knives and other utensils after preparing meats before handling and preparing fruits and vegetables
- Avoid sharing eating utensils or drinking from the same containers as other people
- Discard unused and leftover foods within 4 days
- Clean and disinfect all surfaces that have come into contact with raw meats, including counter tops, the kitchen sink, cutting boards etc. with a simple solution of bleach and water:

** Fill a quart size spray bottle of water with 1 teaspoon of plain, unscented bleach **

Animals:

- Do not touch or change dirty cat litter. Have someone else change it for you. If you must do so, wear gloves and wash your hands thoroughly afterward
- Wash your hands thoroughly after cleaning animal cages, picking up animal feces, or touching any animals
- Avoid any contact rodents and their droppings
- Keep all domestic animals updated on their vaccinations
- If you suspect your pet has been on food contact surfaces, clean and sanitize those surfaces

Vaccination Recommendations:

Some vaccinations, such as live vaccines, are not recommended. It is best to ask your health care provider for further details.