



## **White Blood Cell Counts**

White blood cells help the body fight infection. When your white blood count is low, you are more likely to get an infection like a virus or a cold. Staying away from sick people will help keep you well during this time. Although there is no one magic food that will make your blood cell count return to normal, eating a balanced diet is good for overall health and may help your immune system. With a healthy immune system, you may be more able to fight infection. Here are some guidelines:

1. Eat at least 5 fruits and vegetables (ideally 9 or more) each day.
2. Choose foods with healthy fats including canola and olive oil, nuts, seeds, and avocados.
3. Eat enough calories to prevent weight loss. Choose whole foods like beans, legumes, and whole grains.
4. Include lean chicken/turkey, fish, low-fat dairy foods, and eggs to meet your body's protein needs adequately.

There are many supplements that claim to boost your immune system. Some may be helpful and others may not. It is important to talk to your oncology doctor about any supplements you may be taking. Sometimes, they can interfere with cancer treatment. The doctor can help you make decisions and may refer you to a pharmacist and/or dietitian.

### ***Practice safe food and hygiene practices***

1. Cook foods thoroughly. Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Do not leave warm food out of the refrigerator for more than 1 hour.
2. Do not eat raw meat or use raw eggs in recipes that will not be cooked (like milkshakes).
3. Wash hands often, including before and after meals.
4. Have someone else clean out the litter box, bird cage, or fish tank.
5. Do not eat food from cans that are swollen or dented.
6. Never thaw foods at room temperature: thaw in the refrigerator or microwave.
7. Cook foods immediately after thawing.
8. If you have been told you have a low white blood count, avoid uncooked fruits and/or vegetables until your white blood cells increase to a safe level.