PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET ON WATER SAFETY

What water is safe?

Generally, British tap water is safe to drink. However, if your CD4 count is below 200, the safest option is to boil your drinking water (USPHS 1999). Boiling water is the most effective way of killing Cryptosporidium (www.epa.gov). Once boiled and cooled, the water can be stored in the fridge for up to 24 hours in a clean bottle or covered jug. It can then be used for drinking, washing fruit and vegetables, brushing teeth and making ice cubes.

How about bottled water?

Bottled water is not covered by the same stringent regulations as UK tap water, so cannot be guaranteed to be safe from bacteria and waterborne infections. You can easily see how water from mountain springs could be contaminated by nearby grazing sheep. When 68 samples from 16 countries were tested, high levels of bacterial contamination were found in 40% of the commercially bottled mineral water (ICAAC 2004).
Whilst abroad, the safest option would be to take a travel kettle and boil your water. If this is not possible, buy carbonated bottled water, as the acid from the fizz will offer some protection against some bacteria (WHO 2000).

Can I use filters?

Water filters that remove all particles above 1 micron in size are another way of protecting against cryptosporidiosis and other water borne infections. This filter will need to be fixed to your mains water supply, usually under the kitchen sink, and be changed at regular intervals. (We have one in clinic if you'd like to have a look). In the US the National Sanitation Foundation International does independent testing and awards trademarks to filters that remove Cryptosporidium, which can be searched on their website (www.nsf.org).

Jug filters are not adequate and actually harbour potentially harmful bacteria.

Are there any other risks?

Cryptosporidium is not just caught by drinking contaminated water. There are other ways it can be transmitted, such as direct contact with human and animal faeces.
Therefore it is important to wash your hands after going to the toilet, changing a nappy, after handling pets, and gardening. Avoid oral-anal sexual practices.

Food Safety Advice:

Avoid:	*Safe Alternatives:*	*Reason / Risk:*
Cheese with blue veins e.g.: Stilton; Danish Blue	Cheese without Blue veins e.g: Cheddar, Cheshire etc.	Listeria
Mould Ripened Cheeses e.g: Camembert & Brie	Cheese without mould rind e.g: cream cheese, cottage cheese, mozzarella etc.	Listeria
All types of Pate	Cold Roast Beef / Ham	Listeria
Undercooked ready meals	Ready meals thoroughly cooked until piping hot	Listeria
Undercooked poultry	Well cooked poultry	Salmonella
Raw eggs/ eggs with runny yolk	Eggs with solid yolk / white	Salmonella
Foods containing raw egg e.g: home made: Mayonnaise / icecream / cheesecake / mousse/ Royal icing	Foods made with pasteurised egg e.g: bought mayonnaise, bought cheesecake & baked foods containing egg e.g: sponge / fruit cake	Salmonella
Undercooked meat / game	Well cooked meat, game & poultry	Toxoplasmosis
Raw / farm Unpasteurised goat's, sheep's & cow's milk	Pasteurised / UHT / homogenised milk & yoghurt	Toxoplasmosis
Unwashed fruit & vegetables	Washed fruit & vegetables that are soil free	Toxoplasmosis
Raw shellfish e.g: oysters	Cooked fish	Food Poisoning

Take Care:

- Always wash hands after handling raw meat & keep raw foods separate from ready to eat foods to avoid food poisoning
- Always wear gloves when gardening or changing cat litter & wash your hands afterwards. This is to avoid toxoplasmosis an infection caused by a parasite found in meat, cat faeces & soil.

Produced by Dietitian's at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, Sept 2008