

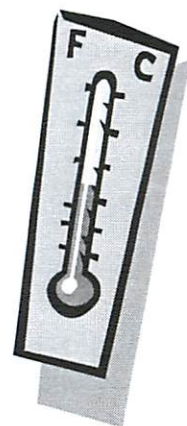
FOOD SAFETY & PREGNANCY

Some foods that are generally considered safe to healthy people have special risks during pregnancy. Avoiding certain foods and following advice on general food safety will help keep you and your baby safe during pregnancy.

Advice on General Food Safety

Many foods contain contaminants (germs/poison) that do not change the appearance, smell or taste of food, but can make you ill. The best way to prevent food-borne illness is to store and prepare food at home safely. The following guidelines may be helpful in reducing the risk of food-borne illness.

- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources, such as beef, pork, poultry or eggs. Cook meats to 70-74° Celsius /160-165° Fahrenheit, and reheat to at least 74° C /165° F. Do not eat poultry, ground or rolled meat that is undercooked/rare. Avoid runny eggs or foods that contain raw eggs.
- Avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk or foods made from raw milk.
- Avoid cross-contamination, which is the passing of germs between raw foods and cooked foods. Keep uncooked meats separate from vegetables and from cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods.
- **Do not** store fresh or cooked meat and poultry products for more than 2-3 days in the refrigerator.
- Wash all raw vegetables, melons and fruits thoroughly before eating. Avoid eating raw sprouts, as they have been linked with food-borne illness.
- Wash hands, knives and cutting boards after handling uncooked foods. Wash your hands before preparing food, and wash and disinfect food preparation surfaces and utensils that have been in contact with raw foods. To disinfect, use 1 tablespoon of unscented household bleach in one gallon of warm water to clean the surface.
- Always use water that is potable (safe to drink) for drinking, washing hands, washing dishes, and cleaning fruits and vegetables. Test well water once a year for bacteria.



Foods of Special Concern

Listeriosis is a type of food-borne illness, caused by the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. It is a rare, but serious disease. During the first three months of pregnancy it can cause miscarriage, and later in pregnancy, severe illness or stillbirth. Early diagnosis and effective treatment are crucial to the survival of the infected unborn baby.

The symptoms of listeriosis are nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhea and fever. Unlike other bacteria, *Listeria monocytogenes* can survive in cold temperatures and sometimes grows on food in the refrigerator. Due to these concerns, the following foods should be avoided during pregnancy:

- **Do not** eat soft cheeses such as Feta, Brie, Camembert, Blue-veined, and Mexican-style cheese. (Hard cheese, processed cheese, cream cheese, cottage cheese, or yogurt may be eaten.)
- **Do not** eat leftover foods or ready-to-eat foods, such as hot dogs and deli meats, unless they are heated thoroughly (cooked until steaming hot) before eating.
- **Do not** eat refrigerated pate or meat spreads.
- **Do not** eat refrigerated smoked seafood unless it is an ingredient in a cooked dish.

Campylobacteriosis is an infection of the intestinal tract caused by the *Campylobacter* bacteria. It occurs after eating or drinking contaminated food, water, unpasteurized milk or dairy products, and occasionally, by contact with infected people or animals. Infection may cause spontaneous miscarriage in the 1st trimester and premature labour in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters. Always treat raw poultry, beef and pork as if they are contaminated and handle them properly.

Mercury is an element known to cause harm to nerve tissue and effect the development of unborn and growing children. When we eat food-containing mercury it builds up over time in our bodies. Some fish contain higher levels of mercury; however, fish are an excellent source of high quality protein and omega-3 fatty acids. Due to the importance of fish in the diet, only fish likely to contain high levels of mercury should be limited. It is recommended that (4):

- Pregnant women and young children consume one serving per week, or more, of fish that is likely to be low in mercury and high in omega-3 fatty acids: e.g. “light” canned (non-albacore) tuna, sardines, canned salmon, Pacific/wild salmon, mackerel, herring, halibut, perch, trout, bass, scallops, shrimp.
- Pregnant women, those of childbearing children limit their consumption of “white” (albacore) tuna to one can per month and avoid eating fresh or frozen predatory fish (tuna, marlin, swordfish, shark).

Tips for a Food Safe Home

- ✓ Use a meat thermometer!
- ✓ Check expiry dates on food in the refrigerator. Use the food up well before those dates.
- ✓ Write dates on leftovers.
- ✓ Use a refrigerator thermometer to make sure that the temperature stays 4° C / 40° F or below.
- ✓ When in doubt, throw it out!

Healthy Snacks for Pregnancy

◆ Whole wheat crackers and cheese	◆ Yogurt shakes (fruit, yogurt, orange juice & granola)
◆ Whole grain muffins & cheese	◆ Mini sandwiches on whole wheat bread (peanut butter & honey, salmon or egg)
◆ Air popped popcorn	◆ Fruit breads (banana bread or zucchini loaf), oatmeal cookies or date squares
◆ Fresh vegetables & fruit with humus or yogurt dip	◆ Pitas and legume vegetable spreads (black bean or chick pea humus)
◆ Bagels with cream cheese or peanut butter	◆ Low fat granola with yogurt and fruit
◆ Ice cream sundaes (ice cream with fruit and toppings)	◆ English muffins or pita bread topped with spaghetti sauce, grated cheese served
◆ Pita bread with "light" tuna, cheese, lettuce, and tomato in an open pocket	◆ Kabobs made with any combination of cheese, fruit and vegetables
◆ Parfait made with yogurt and pureed or chopped fruit	◆ Dried fruit, roasted nut or seeds
◆ Celery stick with peanut butter or cheese whiz and raisins	◆ Cottage cheese and fruit

To complete your snack and quench your thirst you can top them off with water, milk or unsweetened fruit juice!

References:

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4. Ontario Public Health Association. Position on fish consumption, with respect to Methylmercury content, by pregnant women, women of childbearing age and young children. 2004. From www.opha.on.ca