

FOODS TO AVOID IN PREGNANCY

Why do I need to avoid some foods in pregnancy?

Some foods that are not properly prepared or stored can contain disease-causing bacteria such as listeria or salmonella. Please read the handout: Food safety in pregnancy for further information on diseases caused by transmission of bacteria.

If you take precautions to avoid food that may be contaminated, your chances of developing either illness are tiny. Even if you eat one of the listed foods without realizing it, your chances are still extremely small. However the safest approach is to avoid any food or situations that may put you or your developing baby at risk.

Pregnant women should avoid:

Soft, unpasteurized Cheese

- It is recommended to avoid all soft and semi-soft cheeses due to the risk of listeriosis
- This includes Brie, Camembert, Feta, Goat cheese, Queso fresco, Panela and Blue-veined cheeses
- Soft cheeses that are labeled “pasteurized” are likely safe to consume during pregnancy, but due to the soft nature of the cheese it is still possible for listeria to grow after pasteurization.
- It is recommended to avoid cheese made from raw unpasteurized milk

Deli Meats

- All non-dried deli meats including: hot dogs, cold cuts.
- Hot dogs, especially eaten straight from the package without further heating. The fluid within hot dog packages may contain more *Listeria* than the hot dogs themselves.
- Dried and salted meats such as pepperoni and salami are a lesser risk as they generally do not support the growth of *Listeria bacterium*.
- The risk of *Listeria* may be reduced by reheating deli meat until steaming hot; an internal temperature of 165 degrees.
- Always wash your hands well after handling hot dogs

Meat and Poultry

- Always cook raw food from animal sources well. Examples are: beef, pork and poultry
- Keep uncooked meats separate from other foods

Fish

- Avoid Sushi, with raw or uncooked fish
- Avoid raw shellfish such as oysters or clams
- Cook shellfish until the shell opens and the flesh is fully cooked; cook fish until flesh is firm and flakes easily with a fork or to 145 degrees F.
- Avoid refrigerated smoked fish and precooked seafood such as shrimp, crab and deli seafood salads
- Avoid fish high in mercury; best choices are two weekly servings of white fish such as cod, halibut, tilapia, snapper; and oily fish such as salmon.

Eggs

- Avoid raw or undercooked eggs. Ensure eggs are cooked until the white and yolk are firm.
- Avoid foods made with raw or lightly cooked eggs (for example, homemade mayonnaise, homemade ice cream or custard, unpasteurized eggnog, hollandaise sauce or caesar salad dressing).

Raw sprouts

Raw sprouts, especially alfalfa sprouts, should not be consumed by pregnant women because of the potential health hazards they pose. Raw sprouts like alfalfa can be an e-coli bacteria hazard. Raw sprouts like clover, radish and beans can lead to salmonella - a disease caused by the bacteria residing on the sprouts. A recent salmonella outbreak (2009) from raw alfalfa has led to the issue of a warning to the public to stop consuming these raw sprouts. A single sprout can contain a highly infectious dose because the salmonella proliferate rapidly. The disease springs from the contaminated seeds when consumed.

The seeds are stored in dry conditions wherein the bacteria remain dormant, but once they are sprouted in a warm environment the bacterial growth gets activated. E-coli and salmonella bacteria cause diarrhea, nausea, abdominal cramping and fever and other serious illnesses in pregnant women. If these bacteria are passed on by the expecting mother to the baby in utero; the baby may develop diarrhea, fever and meningitis after birth.

Rinsing sprouts will not help to remove the bacteria. Even homegrown sprouts present risks of ailments if they are eaten raw or lightly cooked. In fact they are more risky than commercially produced raw sprouts because they are not disinfected by home growers in the same manner as commercial farmers sanitize their sprouts.

Unpasteurized juice or milk products

- Avoid unpasteurized juices, (may be labeled “fresh squeezed” and any raw milk products because of the risk of listeriosis.

Caffeine and Pregnancy

Until recently, caffeine was considered to be off limits to pregnant women. Today, however, the evidence suggests that having one or two servings of caffeinated beverages a day while pregnant is acceptable.