



EATING SAFELY DURING PREGNANCY

During pregnancy, you can eat the same things that you normally eat when you were not pregnant. But especially in the first few months of your pregnancy, your baby can be hurt by poisons (toxins) or germs (bacteria). For this reason, you need to be aware of these food dangers and learn how to choose and prepare your food safely.

What Foods Might Be Harmful to My Baby During Pregnancy?

The foods of most concern are fish, meat, milk, and cheese. Because these are important parts of most diets, you will want to learn to choose the right fish, meat, milk, or cheese.

What's the Problem With Fish?

Many fish—especially fish that are large, eat other fish, and live a long time—have mercury in them. Mercury can cause problems with the development of your baby's brain and nerves. Fish may also have dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). These toxins may cause problems with the development of your baby's brain and may cause cancer.

So Should I Just Stop Eating Fish?

No. Fish is a wonderful food. It has lots of good protein and other nutrients. You can continue to eat fish, but you may wish to cut down on the amount of fish you eat and change the kind of fish you eat. Information about which fish are good to eat during pregnancy is listed on the back of this page.

What Meat Is Dangerous?

In the United States most of our meat is safe to eat. However, meat that has not been kept cold or that has not been prepared properly may have germs or parasites that could harm you or your baby. Raw meat may contain toxoplasmosis. Toxoplasmosis is a germ that can damage your growing baby's eyes, brain, and hearing. The backside has more information.

What Do I Need to Know About Milk and Cheese?

Some cheese may contain germs (bacteria) called listeria. These germs can cause a disease called listeriosis, which may cause miscarriage, stillbirth, or serious health problems for your baby. To avoid listeriosis, you may want to avoid soft cheeses like Mexican-style queso blanco fresco, or Brie. The flip side will tell you which cheeses you can continue to enjoy and which types to avoid.

How Do I Prepare Food Safely?

- Wash your hands and cooking surfaces often.
- Keep raw meat away from raw fruit and vegetables and cooked meat.
- Cook your food until it is steaming hot. Keep uneaten food cold or frozen.

Eating Safely During Pregnancy: Fish, Meat, Milk, and Cheese

Food	Recommendations
Fresh Fish Shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish Farmed salmon Albacore tuna ("white" tuna) Shrimp, canned light tuna, canned or wild salmon, pollock, and catfish	Do not eat Eat no more than 1 meal a month Eat no more than 1 meal a week Eat no more than 2 meals a week
Deli Meats and Smoked Fish Deli meat spread Hot dogs, lunch meat, deli meat, deli smoked fish Canned smoked fish or meat spread	Do not eat Do not eat unless you reheat to steaming hot Eat no more than 2 meals a week
Meat—Beef, Chicken, Pork Any meat that is rotten or raw	Do not eat
Milk and Cheese Unpasteurized milk, feta cheese, brie cheese, camembert cheese, blue-veined cheeses, Mexican-style queso blanco fresco Hard cheeses, semi-soft cheeses like mozzarella, processed cheese slices, cream cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt made with pasteurized milk Skim or 1% pasteurized milk	Do not eat or drink Eat all you want Drink all you want

Note: Check local advisories about the safety of fish caught by family and friends in your local waters. If you can't get advice on this, eat no more than 1 meal a week from fish caught in local waters and don't eat any other fish that week.

Cook fish by broiling, baking, steaming, or grilling. Remove skin and fat before cooking. Do not eat the fat that drains from the fish while cooking.

Cook all meats all the way through. When you eat meat, you should not see any pink inside the flesh. After cutting up raw meat, clean the cutting surface with bleach, soap, and hot water before cutting any raw fruit or vegetables.

For More Information**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety> or <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/pregnancy>

Excellent up-to-date information on food safety issues in the United States and abroad.

Partnership for Food Safety Education

<http://www.fightbac.org>

The Partnership for Food Safety Education has lots of good information on prevention of illness from the food supply.

Food and Drug Administration

<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/news/2004/NEW01038>

The Food and Drug Administration published advisories regarding the consumption of fish in March 2004.

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