

Eating Safely in Pregnancy



What you shouldn't eat in pregnancy

There are certain foods that can possibly cause harm to your baby.

Raw or undercooked meat and poultry are a potential risk of *toxoplasmosis*.

Toxoplasmosis often has no symptoms, but if you are infected while you're pregnant the infection can cause harm to your baby. Avoid eating raw or undercooked meat. In case you did eat some, talk to your doctor because treatment for toxoplasmosis is available. And remember that toxoplasmosis is rare in pregnancy.

Don't eat (or only eat a small amount of) *liver*, because it contains a lot of vitamin A. *Too much vitamin A* can harm your baby.

The foods mentioned below are better avoided, because they might cause *salmonella food poisoning*. Salmonella food poisoning is unlikely to harm your baby, but it can cause severe diarrhea and vomiting:

- Raw or undercooked eggs
- Raw meat and poultry.
- Raw milk.

Fish and shellfish are an important part of a healthy diet. They are a great source of protein and omega-3 fatty acids (containing DHA). Research shows that omega-3 fatty acids eaten by pregnant women may aid in babies' brain and eye development. Also, some researchers believe depression in women during and after pregnancy may be related to not eating enough fish. It is therefore recommended that women who are pregnant and who are breastfeeding eat fish at least twice per week (200-340 g). Eat a variety of cooked seafood that contains little or no mercury, but are high in omega-3 fatty acids: salmon, anchovies, herring, sardines, trout, Atlantic and Pacific mackerel. However, limit eating oily fish to two portions per week.

Some types of fish should be avoided or only eaten in small amounts, because they contain high levels of mercury, which can damage your baby's developing nervous system:

- Don't eat shark, marlin, swordfish, tilefish, king mackerel.
- Limit the amount of tuna (especially white tuna) to 140 g/week.
- *Raw shellfish* and *fish* might contain *harmful bacteria and viruses* that can cause food poisoning. Don't eat them raw, only when they're well cooked.



Some foods may contain harmful bacteria such as *listeria*. Although infection with *listeria* is rare, even a mild form of the illness in a pregnant woman can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth or severe illness in a newborn. Examples of foods that might grow *listeria* and should therefore be avoided in pregnancy are:

- All types of pâté.
- Mold ripened soft cheeses, such as brie, camembert, chevre.
- Soft blue-veined cheese, such as Danish blue, gorgonzola and Roquefort.

These soft cheeses are safe to eat when they have been cooked thoroughly. Hard cheeses and soft cheeses like cottage cheese, mozzarella, feta, cream cheese, paneer, ricotta, halloumi, goat's cheese and cheese spreads are safe to eat in pregnancy.

Other foods to avoid:

Don't eat fruit and vegetables with soil on them. Wash foods to remove all traces of soil and dirt.

Limit the amount of caffeine to 200 mg per day. The approximate amount of caffeine found in food and drinks is:

- 1 mug of coffee: 100-140 mg
- 1 mug of black tea: 75 mg
- 1 mug of green tea: 25 mg
- 1 can of cola: 40 mg
- 50 g bar of chocolate: 25-50 mg

Other things to keep in mind:

- Wash your hands before eating and handling food.
- Thoroughly wash all fruit, vegetables, utensils and surfaces.
- Wash all utensils, surfaces, and your hands after preparing raw meat.
- Thoroughly cook raw meats, fish and shellfish.
- Boil raw milk.
- Keep leftovers covered in the fridge and use them within two days.
- Don't eat foods that have passed its "used by" date.

Please be aware that the information provided is intended solely for general educational and informational purposes only. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician for any questions you may have regarding your medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have received in this program.

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