

FOODS TO AVOID DURING PREGNANCY

Understanding what foods to avoid during pregnancy can help you make the healthiest choices for you and your baby.

AVOID SEAFOOD HIGH IN MERCURY.

Seafood can be a great source of protein and iron, and the Omega 3 fatty acids in many fish can help promote your baby's brain development. However, some fish and shellfish contain potentially dangerous levels of mercury. Too much mercury may damage your baby's developing nervous system.

The bigger and older the fish, the more mercury it may contain. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) encourage pregnant women to avoid:

- Swordfish
- Shark
- King mackerel
- Tilefish

Some types of seafood contain little mercury. Although concerns have been raised about the level of mercury in any type of canned tuna, the FDA and EPA say pregnant women can safely eat up to 12 oz. a week or two average sized portions of:

- Shrimp
- Canned light tuna (limit albacore tuna and tuna steak to no more than 6 oz. a week)
- Salmon
- Pollock
- Catfish
- Cod

AVOID RAW, UNDERCOOKED OR CONTAMINATED SEAFOOD.

To avoid ingesting harmful bacteria or viruses:

- Avoid raw fish and shellfish- it is especially important to avoid oysters and clams.
- Cook seafood properly- cook most fish to an internal temperature of 145 degrees. The fish is done when it separates into flakes and appears opaque throughout. Cook shrimp, lobsters and scallops until they're milky white. Cook clams, mussels and oysters until their shells open. Discard any that don't open.

AVOID UNDERCOOKED MEAT, POULTRY AND EGGS.

During pregnancy, changes in our metabolism and circulation may increase the risk of bacterial food poisoning. In some cases, your body could get sick, too.

To prevent food borne illness:

- Fully cook all meats and poultry before eating- look for juices to run clear, but use a meat thermometer to make sure the internal temperature is correct.
- Cook hot dogs and warm processed deli meats such as bologna until they're steaming hot or avoid completely. They can be sources of a rare but potentially serious food

borne illness known as listeriosis. Limit these foods to 1-2 times per month due to high nitrate content.

- Avoid fridge pates and meat spreads- canned versions are okay.
- Don't buy poultry that has been pre-stuffed. Raw juice that mixes with the stuffing can cause bacterial growth. Frozen poultry that has been pre-stuffed is safe when cooked from its frozen state.
- Cook eggs until egg yolks are firm. Raw eggs can be contaminated with salmonella. Avoid foods made with raw or partially cooked eggs such as egg now, Hollandaise sauce and Caesar dressing.

AVOID UNPASTEURIZED FOODS

Many low fat dairy products such as skim milk, mozzarella cheese and cottage cheese can be a healthy part of your diet. Anything containing unpasteurized cheese is not allowed. These products can lead to food borne illness.

Unless these soft cheeses are clearly labeled as being made with pasteurized milk, don't eat:

- Brie
- Feta
- Camembert
- Blue cheese
- Mexican style cheeses, such as queso blanco, queso fresco and panela.

Also avoid drinking unpasteurized milk or juices.

AVOID UNWASHED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Avoid new sprouts of any kind- alfalfa, clover, radish and mung bean- which also may contain disease causing bacteria.

AVOID LARGE QUANTITIES OF LIVER

Okay to eat but don't overdo it. Liver is high in Vitamin A and too much can cause birth defects.

AVOID EXCESS CAFFEINE

Limit caffeine intake to less than 200 mg of caffeine per day. Too much caffeine can cause a small decrease in birth weight or an increase in miscarriage or stillbirth.

AVOID HERBAL TEAS

Large amounts of herbal teas such as red raspberry leaf can cause contractions.

AVOID ALCOHOL

Mothers who drink have a higher risk of miscarriage and stillbirth. Too much alcohol during pregnancy may result in fetal alcohol syndrome which can cause facial deformities, heart problems, low birth weight and mental problems.