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FOODS YOU SHOULD NOT EAT WHEN PREGNANT

In addition to the usual precaution one should take to avoid food poisoning, there are some additional foods that pregnant women should avoid. This is because of certain infections which are transmitted by the oral route that are usually innocuous in healthy adults but can seriously harm a baby in the womb.

Listeria

There is a very small risk that certain foods may contain a bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. If a mother contracts this illness in pregnancy it can cause miscarriage and stillbirth. Pregnant women should avoid:

- Unpasteurised dairy products
- Pates
- Meatloaf products (such as pre-sliced chicken loaf)
- Cooked and diced chicken (as used in some sandwich shops)
- Uncooked smoked seafood or shellfish
- Soft cheeses (such as brie, camembert, ricotta and blue-vein cheese)
- Previously prepared coleslaws and salads

Most foods are free of *Listeria* and the safest foods are those that are freshly prepared or cooked and eaten soon after. With respect to dairy products hard cheeses, fresh pasteurised milk, UHT milk and yoghurt are considered free of *Listeria*.

Listeria can grow in refrigerated products and it is best to avoid at risk foods that have been stored for more than 24 hours, even under refrigeration or if you are uncertain about the quality of the preparation or storage.

Cross-contamination between raw and processed foods can occur during food preparation and care should be taken to keep these items separate, for example by using separate implements, cutting boards etc. Beware of cross-contamination also during storage, for example from spills in the fridge.

Salmonella

This bacterial infection can cause severe gastroenteritis. Pregnant women are advised to avoid raw or partially cooked eggs or food that may contain them (e.g. home made mayonnaise) and all raw and partially cooked meat, especially poultry.



Toxoplasmosis

This protozoal infection causes a relatively innocuous flu-like illness in adults but, if the infection occurs during pregnancy, it can cause damage to the fetal brain and eyes. The infection can be transmitted in poorly cooked meat, especially pork, soil or the faeces of cats.

Pregnant women should:

- Cook meat thoroughly and check core temperature with a cooking thermometer
- Prevent contamination of food by uncooked meat.
- Avoid contact with cat faeces.
- Wash or peel vegetables and avoid hands to mouth contact with soil.

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