

Food Safety Tips for Pregnant Women, Infants, and Young Children

You're more likely to get foodborne illness when you're pregnant. That's because your immune system isn't as strong. The symptoms (such as nausea and diarrhea) may be severe and your unborn child could even be harmed. This could lead to miscarriage or stillbirth.

Once your baby arrives, food safety will still be important. Infants and young children are more likely to get foodborne illness until their immune system develops (at about 3 years of age).

Some foods are more likely to be contaminated with harmful bacteria. Pregnant women and young children should avoid these:

- *Rare ground beef
- *Unpasteurized apple cider/juice
- *Uncooked hot dogs and lunch meat
- *Alfalfa sprouts
- *Lox (cold-smoked fish)
- *Bean sprouts
- *Raw milk and raw milk cheese (such as queso fresco)
- *Soft cheeses (such as feta, Brie, Camembert, Roquefort)

Safe Choices: Thorough heating kills bacteria and makes these foods safe to eat.

➤ Ground beef

Cook ground beef until the pink color disappears. Cook to 160°F. if you use a thermometer. When you eat at restaurants, send pink hamburgers back for more cooking.

➤ Hot dogs and lunch meat

Put hot dogs in a pan of boiling water. Cover with lid. Boil 5 to 7 minutes.

Avoid commercially packaged or deli lunch meat unless it's heated thoroughly. Use a meat thermometer to heat chunks to 160°F. before slicing.

➤ Smoked fish

Hot-smoked fish is safe to eat. Instructions for smoking fish safely at home are available at County Extension offices. Avoid cold-smoked fish (lox).

➤ Cheeses

These cheeses are safe to eat: cottage cheese, hard cheese (such as Cheddar), processed cheese, and cream cheese.

Read labels and choose pasteurized (heated) milk and cheese made from it.

If you make homemade queso fresco (a white Mexican-style cheese), use pasteurized milk. (Instructions for making this cheese are available at county Extension offices.)

- Apple juice/cider
Read labels and buy pasteurized (heated) juice. Don't assume that the juice you buy at roadside stands has been pasteurized. Heat it in a pan on the stove until bubbles appear.
- Sprouts
Until a way is found to make sprouts safe to eat, use lettuce (washed well) instead of alfalfa sprouts. Cook bean sprouts thoroughly.

Keep it Safe!

Handle food safely when you're pregnant or feeding young children. Remember the three **C**'s...

Keep it clean!

- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling food - especially after using the toilet or changing your child's diapers.
- Scrub hands well after handling eggs and raw meat, poultry and seafood, too.
- Wash counters, cutting boards, and utensils after handling these foods, too. Wipe with diluted bleach (1 teaspoon chlorine bleach in a quart of water).
- Keep uncooked meats and poultry away from ready-to-eat foods. Package them in plastic bags at the grocery store.
- Wash vegetables and fruits well in clean water. Use a brush (or your hands) to scrub them.

Cook it well!

- Cook meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs thoroughly.
- Reheat leftovers to 165°F., if possible.

Cool it soon!

- Keep hot foods **HOT** and cold foods **COLD**.
- Don't leave cooked foods (like baked beans, meat, poultry, casseroles, pasta and potato salads) sitting at room temperature longer than 2 to 3 hours.
- Cool big pots of soups and stews quickly by refrigerating them in shallow pans.

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