

FOOD PRECAUTIONS DURING PREGNANCY

Some precautions are advised during pregnancy to protect the growing baby. These include care with foods that may be contaminated with bacteria like listeria or salmonella, heavy metals such as mercury and too much caffeine or alcohol.

LISTERIA MONOCYTOGENES is a bacterium commonly found in soil, sewage, vegetation and most mammals including man. Listeria has been found in a variety of raw foods such as meat and vegetables as well as processed foods that have been contaminated after processing. It grows readily in the cold and will continue to grow in contaminated foods even when kept in the fridge. Listeria is destroyed during cooking.

Symptoms of listeriosis include fever, muscle aches and sometimes nausea and diarrhoea. If the infection spreads to the nervous system, symptoms such as severe headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance or convulsions can occur. However, most infected pregnant women only experience mild flu-like symptoms, but the infection can cause premature delivery, infection in the newborn, or even stillbirth. Listeriosis can be successfully treated with antibiotics if the diagnosis is prompt.

To avoid Listeriosis follow these guidelines:

- Eat freshly cooked foods.
- Cook beef, pork, lamb, poultry, eggs and seafood thoroughly. Do **NOT** eat these foods raw or undercooked.
- Wash all raw fruits and vegetables very thoroughly. This includes the skins (eg. Melons). Foods grown close to the ground are most at risk and should be preferably peeled and cooked. Special care should be taken with curly leaves such as cabbage and lettuce and fruits like strawberries (try strawberries poached). Foods that cannot be scrubbed or peeled should always be cooked (eg. mushrooms, parsley).
- Keep uncooked meats separate from vegetables, cooked food and ready to eat foods like cheese.
- Wash hands, utensils and cutting boards well after preparing any raw food.
- Avoid unpasteurised milk and any foods made from unpasteurised milk.
- Eat only salads that are freshly prepared and extremely well washed. Dips that contain vegetables should be eaten on the day they are prepared.
- Eat left-overs within 24 hours and reheat until steaming hot.

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AVOID the following:

- Cooled cooked meats like ham, pate, vacuum packed meats, salami, cabanossi and chicken from sandwich shops.
- Uncooked fish and smoked fish like smoked salmon, sushi, and shellfish. Marinated raw fish and shellfish, ready-to-eat prawns and smoked fish roe.
- Unpasteurised cheeses, feta, ricotta and cottage/cream cheese if fruits or vegetables have been added. Any cheese made with mould. Imported Brie and Camembert (Australian varieties sold in cans may be used).
- Soft serve ice cream, commercial fruit salad (unless tinned).
- Commercial salads such as coleslaw, potato/rice/pasta salads and similar varieties.
- Olives (bottled and canned ok), antipasto.

SALMONELLA can cause nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhoea, fever and headache. Pregnant women are NOT at any greater risk of contracting salmonellosis. However in rare cases it may trigger miscarriage.

Eggs are at risk of salmonella contamination and care should be taken that yolks are not soft and meringue is cooked thoroughly. Avoid foods that contain raw egg and (as for listeriosis) always cook meat and poultry thoroughly.

The NSW Food Authority also recommend that all types of sprout be avoided either raw or cooked. These include alfalfa, snow-pea sprouts, mung beans, soya bean sprouts, broccoli sprouts, onion sprouts, sunflower sprouts, clover and radish sprouts

MERCURY is more likely to be found in larger fish than small fish. Most Australian fish have low mercury levels and offer valuable sources of nutrition such as vitamin B12, iodine and omega-3 fatty acids (important for the development of baby's central nervous system).

One serve of fish for pregnant and breastfeeding women is 150g.

Have 2-3 serves per week of any fish or seafood not listed below

OR

Have one serve per week of Orange Roughy (Deep Sea Perch) or Catfish and no other fish that week

OR

Have one serve per fortnight of Shark (Flake) or Billfish (Broadbill, Swordfish, Marlin) and no other fish that fortnight

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CAFFEINE AND ALCOHOL

The recommendation for caffeine is 200mg per day from all sources. One cup of coffee (200ml max) contains approximately 100g of caffeine.

Alcohol is best avoided but one unit per week is considered safe.

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