

## Eating Healthy During Pregnancy

Eating healthy during pregnancy is very important for the health of you and your baby. Most women know what foods they should eat during pregnancy but many women are not aware that some foods and food supplements should be avoided or limited during pregnancy.



### Eating fish while you are pregnant

Mercury is a metal that can be found in certain fish. At high levels, it can be harmful to an unborn baby's developing nervous system.

**Do not eat** shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury.

**You may eat up to 12 ounces a week** (2 average meals) of a variety of fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury.

- Shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish are some commonly eaten fish that are low in mercury.
- “White” tuna (albacore) has more mercury than canned light tuna. When choosing fish, include only up to 6 ounces per week of white tuna.

### Avoid undercooked meat, poultry, eggs, and unpasteurized foods

*Listeria* is a bacteria that is found in soil, ground water, plants, and animals. *Listeria* can survive at low temperatures, like in the refrigerator. Pregnant women are more likely to get sick from *Listeria* than other individuals. Illnesses from *Listeria* can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, or even an infection to the baby, which can cause health problems after birth. Foods that are associated with *Listeria* include refrigerated foods with a long shelf life or foods that do not require cooking before they are eaten. Avoid the following foods during pregnancy: Brie, Roquefort, and Mexican-Style soft cheeses, feta, cold hot dogs, and cold luncheon meats (unless reheated to steaming), deli salads, unpasteurized/raw milk, unpasteurized juice, raw or smoked seafood, and sprouts such as alfalfa, clover, and radish.



### Always practice food safety

- Pregnant women should practice safe food handling practices and pay close attention to washing hands properly. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and handling pets.
- Rinse all fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds.

Know how. Know **now**.

**Most foods can be safely eaten during pregnancy. Here are some tips to follow during pregnancy.**

- Heat hot dogs or luncheon meats until they are steaming hot.
- Cook meat, poultry, and seafood thoroughly. Cook beef to an internal temperature of 160°F, poultry to 165°F, and seafood to 140°F. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of meat and poultry products.
- Choose chunk light tuna, rather than white or albacore tuna.
- Wash fresh vegetables and fruit before eating.
- Choose processed cheese, cottage cheese, Mozzarella cheese, and hard cheese (Asiago, Marble Cheddar, Romano, Parmesan, and Swiss) and avoid those mentioned on the previous page.
- Cook eggs until the white and yolk are firm. Avoid eating products that may contain raw eggs, such as cookie dough and homemade items like dressings, mayonnaise, ice cream, and custard.
- Choose only pasteurized fruit juices.
- Keep foods out of the temperature danger zone 40°-140°F (the range of temperature which bacteria can grow) and discard food kept at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

**Avoid too much caffeine and vitamin A**

- Do not take a vitamin A supplement. High doses during pregnancy can cause birth defects. If you are taking a pre-natal vitamin it will have the appropriate amount of vitamin A.
- Limit caffeine to no more than 200 mg/day.
  - 12 ounce can of soda = 40 mg of caffeine
  - 8 ounce cup of instant coffee = 68 mg of caffeine
  - 8 ounce cup of brewed coffee = 137 mg of caffeine
  - 1 ounce of dark chocolate = 18 mg of caffeine
  - 1 ounce of milk chocolate = 8 mg of caffeine
- Too much caffeine decreases blood flow to the baby, increases baby's heart rate, and may increase the risk of miscarriage.



**Avoid alcohol and smoking**

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can hurt your baby and is the leading cause of birth defects, mental retardation, and developmental disorders. Do not drink alcohol during pregnancy. Smoking during pregnancy can keep your baby from getting the nutrients and oxygen it needs and can result in a lower birth weight baby, learning disabilities, and physical growth problems after birth. Do not smoke during pregnancy.