

Food and Drinks to Avoid While Pregnant

When you're pregnant, it's also important to avoid food-borne illnesses, such as listeriosis and toxoplasmosis, which can be life threatening to an unborn baby and may cause birth defects or miscarriage. Foods to steer clear of include:

- No level of alcohol consumption is considered safe during pregnancy.
- Try to avoid caffeine altogether. One serving of caffeine per day is allowed (i.e. coffee, tea, soda or chocolate).
- Unpasteurized milk or soft, unpasteurized cheeses (often advertised as "fresh") such as feta, goat, Brie, Camembert, and blue cheese.
- Raw eggs or foods containing raw eggs, may carry salmonella.
- Raw or undercooked meats, fish, or shellfish. NO RAW SUSHI.
- Processed meats such as hot dogs and deli meats (these should be thoroughly cooked/heated). Deli meats can then be refrigerated and eaten cold.
- Fish that are high in mercury, including shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish, bluefish or striped bass. Surprisingly canned light tuna seems to be low in mercury and therefore safer in pregnancy. (See more details below regarding fish consumption).
- Juice and cider; these are empty calories. Drink water or fat free milk.
- There is no published data on the safety of artificial sweeteners.

If you've eaten these foods at some point during your pregnancy, try not to worry too much about it now; just avoid them for the remainder of the pregnancy. If you're really concerned, talk to your doctor. For more information: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodbornellnessContaminants/Metals/ucm393070.htm>.

Women who are pregnant or nursing should:

1. Eat 8-12 ounces of a variety of fish a week.

- That's 2 or 3 servings of fish a week.
- For young children, give them 2 or 3 servings of fish a week with the portion right for the child's age and calorie needs.

2. Choose fish lower in mercury.

- Many of the most commonly eaten fish are lower in mercury.
 - These include salmon, shrimp, pollock, tilapia, catfish, and cod.
- Avoid 4 types of fish: tilefish from the Gulf of Mexico, shark, swordfish, and king mackerel.
 - These 4 types of fish are highest in mercury.
- Limit white (albacore) tuna to 6 ounces a week.

Why this advice is important

Fish contains important nutrients for developing fetuses, infants who are breastfed, and young children. Fish provides health benefits for the general public. Many people do not currently eat the recommended amount of fish. If you do not eat fish, you should take a DHA supplement.

* This advice refers to fish and shellfish collectively as "fish."