

Safe Eating During Pregnancy: What to Avoid and How to Stay Healthy



Highlights

Eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods, including vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, dairy, and whole grains.

Avoid raw or undercooked meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products made from unpasteurized milk.

Limit caffeine intake and eliminate alcohol consumption entirely.

Be cautious with leftovers-store them properly and consume them within 24 hours.

Follow safe food handling and hygiene practices.

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Foods to Avoid During Pregnancy

Soft cheeses (brie, camembert, blue cheese, ricotta, feta) unless cooked thoroughly
Unpasteurized milk and dairy products
Undercooked or raw meat, poultry, and fish
Raw or lightly cooked eggs (e.g., homemade mayonnaise, aioli, hollandaise sauce)
Processed and deli meats (unless heated to steaming hot)
Cold-smoked seafood and raw fish (sushi, sashimi, smoked salmon)
Raw sprouts and unwashed vegetables
Liver and liver-based products (due to high vitamin A content)
Alcohol

Caffeinated drinks (coffee, tea, energy drinks, cola)
Certain fish species (shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy, catfish) due to mercury levels
Highly processed foods (fast food, chips, processed snacks)

Risks Linked to Unsafe Foods

Soft cheeses and unpasteurized dairy products
Cold-smoked seafood and raw fish
Deli meats, pâté, and cold chicken
Pre-packaged or pre-cut fruit and salads

Undercooked or raw meat
Unwashed fruits and vegetables
Contaminated water sources

Raw or undercooked eggs
Homemade sauces or desserts made with raw eggs
Undercooked poultry
Raw sprouts

Shark
Marlin
Swordfish
Orange roughy
Catfish

Liver and liver-based products \ (no more than 50 grams per week\)

Food Safety Guidelines

Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and after touching raw meat.

Cook meat, poultry, and seafood to safe internal temperatures.

Store perishable foods in the refrigerator and consume them before their expiration date.

Wash all fruits, vegetables, and herbs under running water before eating.

Avoid sharing utensils, plates, or drinks with others to minimize the risk of contamination.

Consume only pasteurized milk and dairy products.

Avoid soft cheeses unless cooked to 75 °C and eaten immediately.

Hard cheeses like cheddar and parmesan are safe to eat.

Always cook eggs thoroughly until both the white and yolk are solid.

Avoid homemade sauces, desserts, or dishes containing raw eggs.

Cook all meat and poultry until there is no pink color left.

Avoid cold deli meats and p^æt^ unless reheated to at least 75 °C.

Use separate chopping boards for raw meat and vegetables.

Consume only fully cooked fish and seafood.

Avoid sushi, sashimi, and cold-smoked fish.

Follow safe guidelines for mercury consumption in fish.

Wash thoroughly under running water to remove bacteria and pesticides.

Avoid pre-cut fruit and salad bars, as they have a higher risk of contamination.

Do not consume raw sprouts due to potential bacterial growth.

If drinking water quality is uncertain, use bottled water or boil water before consumption.

Avoid iodine-based water treatment methods, as excess iodine can affect fetal thyroid function.

Alcohol and Caffeine During Pregnancy

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)

Low birth weight

Premature birth

Learning disabilities

Instant coffee (1 tsp) - 80 mg

Espresso (1 shot) - 145 mg

Black tea (1 cup) - 50 mg

Cola (375 ml can) - 36 mg

Energy drink (250 ml can) - 80 mg

Milk chocolate (100 g bar) - 20 mg

Leftovers and Allergy-Prone Foods

Refrigerate within two hours of cooking.

Store in a covered container and consume within 24 hours.

Reheat to at least 60°C before eating.

Peanuts and peanut butter

Eggs

Dairy

Fish and shellfish

Tools and Assistance

Peer support - Join online forums or local pregnancy groups to share experiences and get tips from others.

Food tracking journal - Monitor your meals, snacks, and drinks to keep track of safe and unsafe choices.

Weekly meal plans - Plan ahead to avoid last-minute risky food choices and ensure nutritional variety.

Shopping lists - Use a printed or digital list of pregnancy-safe foods when grocery shopping.

Home safety checklist - Keep your kitchen clean and follow guidelines for proper food storage and preparation.