

Snohomish Midwives
57 Cedar Avenue
Snohomish, WA 98290
877-869-6105
Fax: 360-563-2662

Food-borne Illness During Pregnancy

Food-borne Illness

While you are pregnant your immune system is weakened. This is normal but it also means that you are at risk for contracting food poisoning from contaminated food. Food-borne illness during pregnancy can have very serious consequences for you and your unborn baby such as miscarriage, pre-term delivery, and even maternal death.

Additionally, since certain microorganisms are able to cross the placenta your baby is at risk of contracting a variety of irreversible and dire health conditions such as deafness, blindness, and neurological impairment if you become infected with a food-borne illness.

Listeriosis (*Listeria monocytogenes*)

Listeriosis is a harmful bacterium that may be present in refrigerated, ready-to-eat foods such as:

- Smoked seafood, fish, and meat products (unless cooked before eating)
- Luncheon or deli meats and cheeses (unless heated to steaming hot)
- All unpasteurized dairy products (always confirm that soft cheeses have been pasteurized before eating)
- Undercooked meat, especially pork and lamb
- Meat spreads and pates (unless they are canned)
- Hot dogs (unless cooked to steaming)

Toxoplasmosis (*Toxoplasma gondii*)

Toxoplasmosis is a parasite sometimes found in:

- Raw or undercooked meat, especially pork, lamb, and venison
- On unwashed fruits and vegetables
- In soil
- In cat-litter boxes

To avoid contracting Toxoplasmosis you should avoid eating all raw and undercooked meat and seafood, wash your fruits and vegetables before eating them, make sure that there has been no cross-contamination amongst foods during food preparation (do not use the same knife to cut your vegetables that you used to cut raw chicken breast), and always wash your hands well after preparing uncooked meat, after gardening, and after cleaning your cat's litter box (it is preferable to have someone else change your cat's litter box while you are pregnant).

E. coli & Salmonella may be present in raw vegetable sprouts (such as are found in salad bars) and in unpasteurized juices.

REMEMBER!

Foods and drinks **DO NOT** have to look or smell bad to be contaminated with these types of bacteria.