

● Prevent to Protect Theme Resources ●

This is not a complete guide to preventing infections during pregnancy. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider to learn more about how you can help prevent infections that could harm your baby.

Properly prepare food.

Pregnant women and their babies are at increased risk of contracting the bacteria and viruses that cause foodborne illness. Foodborne illness during pregnancy can cause serious health problems for your baby, including prematurity and stillbirth. Some foodborne illnesses, such as [listeriosis](#) and [toxoplasmosis](#), can infect your baby even if you do not have symptoms of foodborne illness. *Make safe food handling a priority for you and your baby while pregnant.*

What you can do to properly prepare food:

- **Wash your hands before and after preparing food.**
Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. Germs from unwashed hands can get into foods and drinks while people prepare or consume them. Germs can multiply in some types of foods or drinks, under certain conditions, and make people sick.
- **Do not eat raw or runny eggs or raw sprouts.**
Raw or undercooked eggs and raw sprouts can contain [Salmonella](#), a bacteria which can be passed to your baby during pregnancy. Cook egg dishes until they have an internal temperature of 160 degrees and cook eggs until the yoke and white are firm.
- **Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and cheese and other foods made from them.**
Soft cheeses made from unpasteurized milk can contain [Listeria](#), a harmful bacteria. Only buy soft cheese and milk with the word “pasteurized” on the label. Pasteurized means that the milk was heated to a high enough temperature for a long enough time to kill illness-causing bacteria.
- **Clean, separate, cook, and chill food.**
USDA, FDA, CDC, and the Ad Council recommend that everyone take these steps for general safe food preparation:
Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often.
Separate: Don't cross-contaminate.
Cook: Cook to safe temperatures.
Chill: Refrigerate promptly.



Resources for Women/Families

Food Safety for Pregnant Women | FoodSafety.gov

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/risk/pregnant/index.html>

Food safety steps that will keep expecting moms safe from foodborne illness.

Listeria Prevention | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/prevention.html>

How to reduce your risk for listeriosis during pregnancy.

Check your Steps: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill | FoodSafety.gov

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/index.html>

Four easy steps to protect you and your family from foodborne illness.

Food Safety: Raw Milk Questions and Answers | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/rawmilk/raw-milk-questions-and-answers.html>

Learn more about how drinking raw milk can cause infections.

While you're Pregnant: What is Foodborne Illness? | FDA

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/HealthEducators/ucm083316.htm>

Learn about foodborne illness and how to prevent certain foodborne risks during your pregnancy.

Preventing Salmonellosis during Pregnancy | March of Dimes

<http://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/salmonellosis.aspx>

Learn more about what you can do to help prevent salmonellosis during pregnancy.

Toxoplasmosis: Reduce Risk from Food | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxoplasmosis/prevent.html>

Learn how you can prevent risk of toxoplasmosis and other infections from food.

Talk to your healthcare provider.

Whether you are planning to become pregnant or not, talk to your healthcare provider about reproductive and preconception health care. Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to prevent infections, including Zika virus and sexually transmitted diseases (referred to as STIs or STDs), before and during pregnancy, make sure that you are up-to-date with vaccinations (shots) before getting pregnant, and talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations that you should receive during pregnancy.

Consider discussing these topics with your healthcare provider to reduce your risk of getting an infection during pregnancy:



Throughout Your Pregnancy

Influenza (Flu) Shot

Get a flu shot during any trimester of your pregnancy to protect from flu.

Foodborne Illness

See your healthcare provider immediately if you show any signs of food borne illness, such as fever, stomach pain, and vomiting. Your healthcare provider can prescribe the appropriate antibiotics, if needed.

Travel

Talk to your doctor before making any travel decisions that will take you far from home. Depending on your travel destination, you may need to receive certain vaccines and medicines before traveling.

Trimester 1 (Weeks 1-12)

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Get tested for chlamydia, syphilis, hepatitis B, herpes simplex virus type II, and HIV at your first prenatal visit.

Trimester 2 (Weeks 13-28)

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Get tested for UTIs, which are infections of the kidney, bladder, or urinary tract. Pregnant women should have their urine tested as a part of routine pregnancy care.

Group B streptococcus (GBS)

GBS is a bacteria that can cause serious health problems in newborn babies. If you think you might have a C-section or go into labor early, talk with your healthcare provider about making a GBS plan.

Trimester 3 (Weeks 29-40)

Group B streptococcus (GBS)

GBS is a bacteria that can cause serious health problems in newborn babies. Get tested for group B strep bacteria when you are 35 to 37 weeks pregnant.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Shot

Pertussis, also known as **whooping cough**, is a highly contagious disease that causes violent coughing. Get the pertussis shot (Tdap) when you are 27-36 weeks pregnant.

Resources for Women/Families

Maternal Vaccines: Part of a Healthy Pregnancy | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pregnancy/pregnant-women/index.html>

CDC guidelines for the vaccines you need before, during, and after pregnancy.

STDs during Pregnancy | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/pregnancy/stdfact-pregnancy-detailed.htm>

Details on the effects of specific STIs during a woman's pregnancy with links to web pages with additional information.

Group B Strep (GBS) Prevention in Newborns | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/groupbstrep/about/prevention.html>

Strategies to prevent GBS in newborn infants.

Health Information for Travelers | CDC

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

Learn actions you can take to stay healthy and safe on your trip.

Travel Health Notices | CDC

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

Travel notices are designed to inform travelers and clinicians about current health issues related to specific destinations. Check this list before traveling.

Pregnant Women & Influenza (Flu) | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm>

Learn more about flu prevention and pregnant women.

Get the Whooping Cough Vaccine While You Are Pregnant | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/pregnant/mom/get-vaccinated.html>

Learn more about receiving the whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy.

Urinary Tract Infections during Pregnancy | American Academy of Family Physicians

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/2000/0201/p721.html>

Learn more about UTIs during pregnancy.

Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.

Pregnant women have to be careful about how they handle and care for animals. Pets can carry bacteria, viruses, and parasites that can cause several infections that can harm you and your baby, including [toxoplasmosis](#), [lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus \(LCMV\)](#), and [salmonellosis](#).

Pregnant women should also take steps to reduce their risk of being bitten by a mosquito. Mosquitos can carry several infections, including [West Nile virus](#), [Dengue virus](#), [malaria](#), and [Zika virus](#). Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a serious birth defect called [microcephaly](#) a sign of incomplete brain development.



What you can do to protect yourself from animals and insects:

- **Stay away from wild or pet rodents, live poultry, lizards and turtles, and do not clean cat litter boxes while pregnant.**

Have a pest control professional get rid of pests in or around your home. If you have a pet rodent, like a hamster or guinea pig, have someone else care for it until after your baby arrives. Some rodents might carry a harmful virus. [Wash your hands](#) well with soap and water after contact with your pets, and their tanks or poop.

Dirty cat litter might contain a harmful parasite called [Toxoplasma gondii](#), which causes [toxoplasmosis](#). *Have your partner, a friend, or family member change used cat litter for you.* If you must change the litter yourself, be sure to wear gloves and wash your hands afterwards.

- **When mosquitoes are active,**
 - **Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.** Mosquitos can carry several infections, including [West Nile virus](#), [Dengue virus](#), [malaria](#), and [Zika virus](#). Ticks can also carry many infections, such as [Lyme disease](#). These infections can be dangerous to your unborn baby. Lyme disease that goes untreated can cause brain, nerve, spinal cord, and heart problems while Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a serious birth defect called [microcephaly](#).

Mosquitos are most active at dusk and dawn while ticks are active at all times of the day, typically in warmer months. Minimizing areas of exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, boots, and hats can help prevent bites.

- **Use [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) registered insect repellents](#) with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol).** Insect repellants prevent bites by making people less attractive to mosquitos and ticks. When used as directed, EPA-registered insect repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Resources for Women/Families

Caring for Pets when you're Pregnant | March of Dimes

<http://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/pets-and-other-animals-during-pregnancy.aspx>

A guide to handling and caring for pets safely during pregnancy.

Diseases from Rodents | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/rodents/diseases/index.html>

Details diseases that are directly and indirectly transmitted by rodents.

Avoid Bug Bites | CDC

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/avoid-bug-bites>

Prevent bug bites-what to know before you go!

Find the Insect Repellent that is Right for You | EPA

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you>

Use the search tool to help you choose the repellent product that is right for you. You can specify the insect, protection time, active ingredient, or other product-specific information.

Zika Virus-Protect yourself & Others | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/protect-yourself-and-others.html>

Tips to help protect you, your partner, your family, your friends, and your community from Zika.

Avoid Mosquito Bites | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/stopmosquitoes/index.html>

Feature on preventing diseases like Zika, dengue, and chikungunya that are spread by mosquitoes.

Maintain good hygiene.

Hygiene refers to the activities that help prevent the spread of infections. Personal hygiene can include hand washing, bathing, and brushing your teeth. Maintaining good hygiene is one of the simplest steps that women can take to prevent infections. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not maintaining good hygiene, including [salmonellosis](#), [norovirus](#), [adenovirus](#), and [hand, foot, and mouth disease](#).



What you can do to maintain good hygiene:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially**
 - **Before preparing foods or eating foods,**
 - **After handling raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables,**
 - **After being around or touching pets or other animals,**
 - **After changing diapers or wiping runny noses.**

Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to remove germs and prevent the spread of germs to others. Learn more about how and when to wash your hands:

<http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>.

- **Do not put a young child's food, utensils, drinking cups, or pacifiers in your mouth.** Children's saliva or urine may contain a virus called [cytomegalovirus \(CMV\)](#), which women can pass to their baby during pregnancy. Always remember to wash your hands after coming in contact with any bodily fluids, such as saliva or urine.

Resources for Women/Families

When & How to Wash Your Hands | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Learn more about when and how to wash your hands, the importance of using soap and water, and what you can do if soap and clean, running water are not available.

Cytomegalovirus and Pregnancy | March of Dimes

<http://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/cytomegalovirus-and-pregnancy.aspx>

Learn how you can protect yourself from CMV.

Toxoplasmosis: Reduce Risk from the Environment | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxoplasmosis/prevent.html>

Learn how you can prevent risk of toxoplasmosis from the environment.

Prevention & Treatment-Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/about/prevention-treatment.html>

Learn how you can lower your risk of being infected with hand, foot, and mouth disease.

Pregnancy-Staying Safe and Healthy: Oral Health | Office on Women's Health

<http://womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/you-are-pregnant/staying-healthy-safe.html#c>

Learn more about important oral health tips for pregnant women.