

5 Infections to Know About If Pregnant or Planning a Pregnancy

By [The Teratology Society](#)

- 1. Toxoplasmosis:** A parasite called *Toxoplasma gondii* causes this infection. Contracting the infection during pregnancy has been found to increase the risk of miscarriage and stillbirth as well as problems in the baby such as deafness, blindness, cerebral palsy, and seizures.
How to Avoid Toxoplasmosis: The toxoplasmosis-causing parasite can be found in undercooked or infected meat as well as in cat feces. You can reduce your risk by thoroughly cooking meats and washing hands after handling raw meat. Also, don't touch cat feces or change litter boxes during pregnancy.
- 2. Listeriosis:** The *Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria causes the Listeriosis infection. Contracting Listeriosis during pregnancy has been found to increase the risk of preterm pregnancy, miscarriage and even stillbirth.
How to Avoid Listeriosis: The *Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria can be found in soft cheeses (like brie and feta), deli-meats and raw vegetables. Avoid eating unpasteurized milk and soft cheeses, as well as the juice found in hot dog packages and deli meats. Don't eat packaged, undercooked meats like paté. Make sure any leftovers are re-heated to the point that they are steaming.
- 3. Cytomegalovirus (CMV):** CMV is a viral infection spread through bodily fluids, like feces and saliva. CMV is quite common but can cause problems such as hearing loss, seizures and mental retardation in baby if mom contracts it for the first time during her pregnancy.
How to Avoid CMV: Don't share food or utensils with others and if you work at a daycare center, you are at an increased risk for coming in contact with CMV through feces and tears. Practice good hygiene and wash hands frequently.
- 4. Zika Virus:** A viral infection caused by the Zika virus can cause severe birth defects in an unborn baby if a woman contracts the virus during her pregnancy. The birth defects can be severe, such as mental retardation and microcephaly (small head size). Researchers are still learning about all of the long-term effects Zika infection can have on a baby.
How to Avoid Zika Virus: Certain types of mosquitos can carry the Zika virus and it's important to avoid traveling to places where there are current Zika outbreaks if pregnant. Stay up to date on Zika outbreaks by visiting the [CDC website](#). Wear insect repellants, stay indoors during peak mosquito seasons and avoid getting bitten by a mosquito.
- 5. Chicken Pox:** Chicken pox (varicella) is a very contagious viral infection and if contracted during pregnancy has been found to cause developmental delays, small head size and other problems in baby.
How to Avoid Chicken Pox: Most people have been exposed to chicken pox during childhood and a vaccine has been developed as well. If you don't think you've had chicken pox, ask your doctor about getting vaccinated if planning a pregnancy.



From bench to bedside, the Teratology Society is an international organization improving research on birth defects and other developmentally-mediated disorders, education, and prevention strategies. Learn more about this cutting-edge non-profit at www.Teratology.org.