

High-mercury seafood; shark, swordfish, tilefish, and canned albacore tuna are the highest mercury containing fish. Mercury accumulates over time and because these large fish live longer, they store more mercury in their flesh. Mercury accumulates in people too and it can hurt baby's brain, hearing, and vision, so put high-mercury fish on your "do not eat" list.

As for low-mercury fish – it's okay! cod, salmon, trout, catfish, and shellfish are actually good for you and baby. They're excellent sources of lean protein, B-12, and zinc. And salmon, trout, and mackerel are rich in omega-3 fatty acids including DHA (which may boost baby's brain development). But they do have some mercury in them, so keep to 12 ounces or less of them a week. Also, make sure all the fish and seafood you eat are very fresh and cooked thoroughly.

Sushi; sushi and sashimi are off limits. Some bacteria can only be killed by heat and since sushi is served raw, there's an increased likeliness for food poisoning. Some people order rolls made of cooked fish at the sushi bar, but there's still the potential for cross contamination if they are prepared on the non-cooked sushi surface. Choose a teriyaki or hibachi entrée instead.

Deli meat; cold cuts (including ham, turkey, bologna, and more) can be dangerous to you and baby. And so are hot dogs. These meats can be contaminated with listeria – the only known bacterium that can survive at refrigerator temperatures of 40 degrees or less. And likely other types of food poisoning, listeriosis and the infection caused by listeria, enter into the bloodstream directly and can reach the baby through the placenta. Listeriosis is especially scary because it can cause miscarriage. Luckily, heating foods to at least 145 degrees F (165 if it's leftovers) will kill the bacteria, so you can grill that ham sandwich and still enjoy it.

Undercooked meats; consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness from bacteria. Make sure meat or poultry reaches the recommended temperature which is usually 165 degrees F.

Deli prepared foods; you don't know how long the foods have been in the refrigerated case, what the temperature is in there (and if it stays at a consistent 40 degrees or less), and whether all the ingredients in the salad or dish have been pasteurized. Avoid the deli altogether when pregnant.

Unpasteurized cheese; what to look for in cheese: pasteurization. Always check the label. While feta or mozzarella may be pasteurized, it may not be. The same goes for brie, camembert, bleu cheese, and some Mexican cheeses. If it's fresh or homemade, like some mozzarella or a small-batch artisan cheese is, ask the person that prepared it. And when in doubt, skip it for now, since unpasteurized cheese can carry listeria. Safer types are cheddar or Swiss.

Raw bean sprouts; they add a satisfying crunch to salad and they seem super healthy – but sprouts can harbor bacteria such as salmonella, listeria, and E coli. "Any raw vegetable that swims in a pool of water in its package is at high risk for bacteria," You'll also want to throw out a bag of lettuce if it pools in water. As for packaged salad, eat it within a day or two of opening it.

Raw dough and batter; resist licking the spoon when you're baking. When its unbaked dough and batter, it can contain salmonella which can cause food-borne illness.

Unpasteurized drinks and juice; out at the farmers market? If you're not sure if the juice, cider(s), or Kombucha is pasteurized? The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires warning labels on any fruit or vegetable juice that has not been pasteurized. However, the agency does not require warning labels for fresh-squeezed juices or cider sold by the glass (like at health-food stores, juice bars, farm stands, and apple orchards). If this fruit or veggie is juiced on the spot and consumed within an hour, it's safe. But freshly-squeezed juices that sit around for longer than that are too risky for pregnant women to consume.

Caffeine; while caffeine may be safe in small amounts, pregnant women with high blood pressure or anxiety should completely abstain.

Herbal tea; surprisingly, you should avoid some teas also – even if it doesn't have caffeine. There are not many studies on herbs during pregnancy. It is known that some of them cause uterine contractions which would not be wanted before 37 weeks. Stick with familiar herbs such as ginger, lemon verbena, or mint or chamomile.

High sugar foods; babies born to women with even slightly higher-than-normal blood sugar levels are at increased risk for a range of pregnancy and delivery-related complications, findings from an international study confirm. The *New England Journal of Medicine* study was largely funded by the National Institutes of Health on 25,000 pregnant women showed that “even a small rise in blood sugar above what is considered normal was associated with an increase in adverse outcomes, including high birth weight, C-section delivery, and preeclampsia, a complication that can lead to premature birth and can be deadly if not treated.” Sometimes with diabetes, there are no symptoms. Even if your glucose tolerance test (typically done in pregnancy at 28 weeks) is normal, it is important to avoid large fluctuations in blood sugar by avoiding excessive sugar and non-complex carbs in your diet. Avoiding large blood sugar fluctuations will help pregnant moms avoid excessive weight gain, avoid excessively large baby birth weight as well as avoiding baby exposure to excessively high insulin levels from mother that could impact baby after birth. When preparing meals, always strive to pair a protein food item with a complex carb item and avoid empty nutrient foods.

Alcohol; There is no safe time during pregnancy to drink alcohol. All forms of alcohol including wines and beer are equally unsafe. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, and a range of lifelong physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities that last a lifetime. These disabilities are known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, or FASDs. People with FASDs can have learning disabilities, hyperactivity, or difficulty with attention deficits. When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, so does her baby. –CDC

Herbal supplements; we recommend caution with use of herbal remedies for pregnant women since safety has not been established through extensive research. Unlike prescription drugs, natural herbs and vitamin supplements do not go through the same scrutiny and evaluation process by the FDA. As a result, the quality and strength of an herbal supplement can vary between two batches of the same product and between products from different manufacturers. Although herbs are natural and from plants, not all herbs are safe to take during pregnancy. The FDA urges pregnant women not to take any herbal products without talking to their health-care provider or researching the effects first.

*And really, avoid any one item in excess during pregnancy.