

Food to avoid when pregnant

This food to avoid when pregnant table provides essential information about foods to avoid during pregnancy to ensure the safety and well-being of both the mother and baby. It also suggests healthier alternatives to help support a nutritious and safe diet during pregnancy.

| Food | Why to avoid | What to eat instead |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Raw or undercooked meat | Can contain harmful bacteria (e.g., Salmonella, Listeria) or parasites that increase the risk of food poisoning, which could harm both the mother and baby. | Fully cooked meats, poultry, and seafood. Ensure meat is thoroughly cooked and reaches the correct internal temperature. |
| Unpasteurized dairy | May contain harmful bacteria like Listeria, which can lead to infections and pregnancy complications such as miscarriage or premature birth. | Pasteurized dairy products such as milk, cheese, and yogurt. Always check labels to ensure they are pasteurized. |
| Raw or undercooked eggs | Raw eggs may contain Salmonella, which can cause food poisoning and affect your immune system and pregnancy. | Cooked eggs (scrambled, boiled, or poached) or pasteurized eggs. |
| High-mercury fish | Fish like shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and tilefish contain high levels of mercury, which can damage your baby's developing nervous system. | Low-mercury fish like salmon, mackerel, sardines, and trout. |
| Deli meats and processed meats | These meats can contain Listeria or high levels of sodium and preservatives, which may increase the risk of preterm labor or other complications. | Freshly cooked meats or lean cuts of poultry, beef, or fish. |

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|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Unwashed fruits and vegetables | Unwashed products can carry harmful bacteria, pesticides, and parasites like Toxoplasma, which can affect your baby. | Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating or cooking. |
| Soft cheeses (unpasteurized) | Soft cheeses made from unpasteurized milk can carry Listeria, increasing the risk of foodborne illnesses and complications during pregnancy. | Hard cheeses (cheddar, Parmesan, Swiss), or pasteurized soft cheeses. |
| Caffeine | High levels of caffeine can increase the risk of miscarriage and affect fetal development, including increasing the risk of low birth weight. | Limit caffeine intake or switch to caffeine-free teas or water. |
| Alcohol | Alcohol consumption during pregnancy can lead to fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), which can cause developmental delays and birth defects. | Abstain from alcohol. Opt for non-alcoholic beverages like fruit juice or sparkling water. |
| Uncooked shellfish | Shellfish such as oysters, clams, and mussels can harbor bacteria and viruses, which can cause food poisoning and harm the baby. | Fully cooked shellfish, ensuring it reaches a safe internal temperature. |
| Liver and liver products | Liver contains high levels of Vitamin A, which can be toxic to the baby and may cause birth defects if consumed in excess during pregnancy. | Opt for foods with lower Vitamin A content like lean meats, fish, or plant-based options. |
| Sugary foods and sweets | Excessive sugar intake can lead to gestational diabetes, weight gain, and may increase the risk of complications like preterm birth or high birth weight. | Opt for healthier snacks like fruits, nuts, or whole grains. |