



Foods to avoid during pregnancy



Health



Wellness



Nutrition



Support

Introduction

Nutrition plays an important role during pregnancy and our nutritional needs change at different stages. This booklet is part of a series to provide support at each stage of the journey.

Please be aware these booklets are given as guidance. Nutritional advice can be subject to change and any advice given by your midwife or a medical health professional should always be followed.

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Foods to avoid during pregnancy

Most foods and drinks are perfectly safe to enjoy during pregnancy, but there are some you should be careful with or avoid altogether. Here are some of the facts to be aware of while pregnant...

Unpasteurised dairy and mouldy cheese

This includes cheeses with white coating on the outside, such as brie, camembert and some types of goat's cheese. This is to reduce the risk of food poisoning from a bacterial infection called listeriosis.

Raw or undercooked meat

Meat should be cooked until there is no trace of pink or blood left, while raw or undercooked meat should be avoided. Any cold cured meats (like salami, pepperoni and chorizo) should be cooked thoroughly and not eaten straight from the packet. This reduces the risk of an infection called toxoplasmosis, which can increase the risk of miscarriage. Game meats should also be avoided as they can contain traces of lead from the ammunition.

Higher-mercury fish and raw shellfish

Although fish is recommended during pregnancy, higher-mercury fish such as shark, marlin and swordfish should be avoided. Tuna also has quite a high mercury content, so should be limited to two tuna steaks, or four medium-sized cans of tuna, per week during pregnancy. Oily fish can contain other pollutants, so should also be limited to two portions per week. Raw shellfish, meanwhile, can contain harmful bacteria, viruses or toxins that can cause food poisoning, so this should also be avoided.

Raw or partially-cooked eggs

Avoid raw or partially-cooked eggs with a runny yolk, or any foods containing raw or partially-cooked eggs. These foods can increase the risk of salmonella food poisoning. However, eggs with a British Lion stamp or sometimes just a code can be consumed when raw or partially cooked during pregnancy as they are less likely to contain salmonella.

Caffeine and alcohol

Caffeine should be limited to no more than 200mg per day. There is 100mg in an instant coffee, 75mg in a mug of tea, and 40 mg in a can of cola. It's also advised to drink no more than four cups of herbal tea a day. The safest approach with alcohol is to not drink at all to reduce the risk of harm.

High dose multivitamins and Vitamin A

Do not take high-dose multivitamin supplements, or any supplements with Vitamin A in them. Excess Vitamin A can be toxic to an unborn baby, so it's recommended to avoid any supplements that contain this. Avoid liver and pâté, including vegetarian pâté. (Note: Retinol is a form of Vitamin A found in skincare and acne products. Pregnant women are advised to avoid prescription acne drugs, which contain high amounts of retinol, as a precautionary measure.)

Food hygiene

While pregnant, it's important to pay particular attention to food hygiene, including washing fruits and vegetables thoroughly. Make sure to thoroughly wash your hands, as well as equipment and work surfaces. Raw food should be prepared on separate chopping boards with separate knives.

It's also important to ensure any reheated food is piping hot all the way through.

Call NHS 111 if:

- You feel unwell after eating one of the foods to avoid
- You have sign of listeriosis or toxoplasmosis infection

Find out more

For more information on healthy eating during pregnancy, speak to your midwife who will be able to advise you further. You can also find a wide range of helpful information online:

First Steps Nutrition Trust

www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years

Wigan Council Ante Natal Support

www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Health-Social-Care/Children-and-young-people/Health-and-wellbeing/Early-Years.aspx

NHS Ante Natal Support

www.wvl.nhs.uk/antenatal-information

Family Hubs

www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Education/Family-Hubs/index.aspx

If you would like to learn more or require more information and support, please get in touch!

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