



## How to Protect Yourself and Your Baby

- What is foodborne illness?**
- It's a sickness that occurs when people eat or drink harmful microorganisms (bacteria, parasites, viruses) or chemical contaminants found in some foods or drinking water.
  - Symptoms vary, but in general can include: stomach cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, headache, or body aches. Sometimes you may not feel sick, but whether you feel sick or not, you can still pass the illness to your unborn child without even knowing it.

- Why are pregnant women at high risk?**
- You *and* your growing fetus are at high risk from some foodborne illnesses because during pregnancy your immune system is weakened, which makes it harder for your body to fight off harmful foodborne microorganisms.
  - Your unborn baby's immune system is not developed enough to fight off harmful foodborne microorganisms.
  - For both mother and baby, foodborne illness can cause serious health problems — or even death.



### Tips for a Lifetime

There are many bacteria that can cause foodborne illness, such as *E. coli* O157:H7 and *Salmonella*. Here are **4 Simple Steps** you should follow to keep yourself and your baby healthy during pregnancy and beyond!



#### 1. CLEAN

- Wash hands thoroughly with warm water and soap.
- Wash hands *before* and *after* handling food, and *after* using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with hot water and soap.
- Rinse raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water.



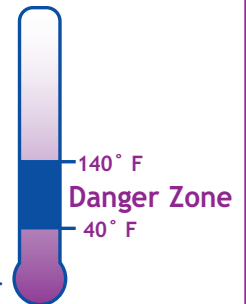
#### 2. SEPARATE

- Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from ready-to-eat foods.
- If possible, use one cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood and another one for fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Place cooked food on a clean plate. If cooked food is placed on an unwashed plate that held raw meat, poultry, or seafood, bacteria from the raw food could contaminate the cooked food.



#### 3. COOK

- Cook foods thoroughly. Use a food thermometer to check the temperature. See the “Lifelong Food Safety” section of the Web site for the “Apply the Heat” chart of recommended cooking times for foods. Click on “Cook.”
- Keep foods out of the **Danger Zone**: The range of temperatures at which bacteria can grow — usually between 40° F and 140° F (4° C and 60° C).
- **2-Hour Rule**: Discard foods left out at room temperature for more than two hours.



#### 4. CHILL

- Your refrigerator should register at 40° F (4° C) or below and the freezer at 0° F (-18° C). Place an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator, and check the temperature periodically.
- Refrigerate or freeze perishables (foods that can spoil or become contaminated by bacteria if left unrefrigerated).
- Use ready-to-eat, perishable foods (dairy, meat, poultry, seafood) as soon as possible.

# 3 Foodborne Risks for Pregnant Women

As a mom-to-be, there are **3 specific foodborne risks** you need to be aware of. These risks can cause serious illness or death to you or your unborn child. Follow these steps to help ensure a healthy pregnancy.

	What it is	Where it's found	How to prevent illness
<b>1</b> <b>Listeria</b>	A harmful bacterium that can grow at refrigerator temperatures where most other foodborne bacteria do not.  It causes an illness called listeriosis.	Refrigerated, ready-to-eat foods and unpasteurized milk and milk products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow the 4 Simple Steps on previous page.</li> <li>Do not eat hot dogs and luncheon meats — <i>unless they're reheated until steaming hot.</i></li> <li>Do not eat soft cheese, such as Feta, Brie, Camembert, “blue-veined cheeses,” “queso blanco,” “queso fresco,” and Panela — <i>unless they're labeled as made with pasteurized milk. Check the label.</i></li> <li>Do not eat refrigerated pâtés or meat spreads.</li> <li>Do not eat refrigerated smoked seafood — <i>unless it's in a cooked dish, such as a casserole.</i> (Refrigerated smoked seafood, such as salmon, trout, whitefish, cod, tuna, or mackerel, is most often labeled as “nova-style,” “lox,” “kippered,” “smoked,” or “jerky.” These types of fish are found in the refrigerator section or sold at deli counters of grocery stores and delicatessens.)</li> <li>Do not drink raw (unpasteurized) milk or eat foods that contain unpasteurized milk.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> <b>Methylmercury</b>	A metal that can be found in certain fish. At high levels, it can be harmful to an unborn baby's or young child's developing nervous system.	Large, long-lived fish, such as shark, tilefish, king mackerel, and swordfish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't eat shark, tilefish, king mackerel, and swordfish. These fish can contain high levels of methylmercury.</li> <li>It's okay to eat other cooked fish/seafood, as long as a variety of other kinds are selected during pregnancy or while a woman is trying to become pregnant. She can eat up to 12 ounces (2 average meals) a week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five of the most commonly eaten fish that are low in mercury are shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish.</li> <li>Another commonly eaten fish, albacore (“white”) tuna has more mercury than canned light tuna. So, when choosing your two meals of fish and shellfish, you may eat up to 6 ounces (one average meal) of albacore tuna per week.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>3</b> <b>Toxoplasma</b>	A harmful parasite. It causes an illness called toxoplasmosis, which can be difficult to detect.	Raw and under-cooked meat; unwashed fruits and vegetables; soil; dirty cat-litter boxes; and outdoor places where cat feces can be found.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow the 4 Simple Steps on previous page.</li> <li>If possible, have someone else change the litter box. If you have to clean it, wash your hands with soap and warm water afterwards.</li> <li>Wear gloves when gardening or handling sand from a sandbox.</li> <li>Don't get a new cat while pregnant.</li> <li>Cook meat thoroughly, see the “Apply the Heat” chart for the proper temperatures.</li> </ul>

*for more information*



- See your doctor or health-care provider if you have questions about foodborne illness.
- FDA Food Information line: **1-888-SAFE FOOD**
- FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition: **www.cfsan.fda.gov**
- Gateway to Government Food Safety Information: **www.foodsafety.gov**
- U.S. Partnership for Food Safety Education: **www.fightbac.org**

This fact sheet is a condensed guide to food safety. For more in-depth information, be sure to check out:

**Food Safety for Moms-to-Be**  
[www.cfsan.fda.gov/pregnancy.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/pregnancy.html)

