

# Listeriosis and Pregnancy

**Listeria is a harmful germ that can be in some food.** Listeriosis is a rare but serious infection caused by eating food contaminated with *Listeria*. Listeriosis mostly affects pregnant women, newborns, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems. Sadly, 1 in 4 pregnant women who get this illness lose their pregnancy or their baby shortly after birth. That's because the germ can spread to your baby and harm them while you are pregnant, even if you don't feel very sick.

## You can take steps to protect your baby.

- **Check for recalled foods contaminated with *Listeria*:** [fda.gov/safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts](https://www.fda.gov/safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts)
- **Call your healthcare provider right away if you have a fever and feel more tired and achy than normal.** Let them know if you ate a recalled food in the past two months or are worried about something you ate. (This is because *Listeria* illness can sometimes start many weeks later.) Early treatment can help save your baby.
- **Choose safer foods to protect your pregnancy from *Listeria*.**

## In general, foods that are safer include:

- **Cooked or reheated foods** that reach a high enough temperature for germs to be killed. (You can let the food cool before eating.)
- **Shelf-stable foods** are heated or dried to kill germs that can cause illness or spoil food. They are in sealed cans, jars, or pouches that do not need to be refrigerated until opened.
- **Pasteurized foods** are heated to a high enough temperature for a long enough time to kill germs.

## Deli Salads

**Avoid:** Premade deli salads, such as coleslaw and potato, tuna, or chicken salad

**Choose instead:** Homemade coleslaw and potato, tuna, or chicken salad

## Deli Meat

**Avoid:** Unheated deli meat, cold cuts, hot dogs, and fermented or dry sausages

**Choose instead:** Deli meat, cold cuts, hot dogs, and fermented or dry sausages reheated to 165°F or until steaming hot



## Pâté and Meat Spreads

**Avoid:** Refrigerated pâté or meat spreads

**Choose instead:** Shelf-stable pâté or meat spreads

## Smoked Fish

**Avoid:** Refrigerated smoked fish

**Choose instead:** Shelf-stable smoked fish or smoked fish cooked in a casserole or other cooked dishes



## Milk, Yogurt, and Ice Cream

**Avoid:** Raw (unpasteurized) milk, yogurt, and ice cream

**Choose instead:** Pasteurized milk, yogurt, and ice cream

## Cheese

**Avoid:**

- Any unheated queso fresco-type cheeses, when made with pasteurized or unpasteurized (raw) milk, such as queso fresco, or similar fresh, soft cheeses such as queso blanco and requesón
- Any type of cheese made with unpasteurized (raw) milk



**Choose instead:**

- Hard cheeses, when made with pasteurized milk, such as Asiago, Cheddar, Parmesan, or Swiss/Gruyere/Emmental
- Cottage cheese, cream cheese, string cheese, feta, and mozzarella, when made with pasteurized milk
- Heated queso fresco-type cheeses or heated unpasteurized (raw) milk cheeses, to 165°F or until steaming hot

## Sprouts

**Avoid:** Raw or lightly cooked sprouts

**Choose instead:** Sprouts cooked until steaming hot



## Melon

**Avoid:** Cut melon left out for more than 2 hours (1 hour if it's exposed to temperatures above 90°F) or cut melon in refrigerator for more than a week

**Choose instead:** Melon that has just been cut



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