

# Food Safety in Pregnancy



**Alberta Health  
Services**

**Nutrition Services  
Population and Public Health**



# Menu of Cards

Pick a topic to learn more about.



Caffeine



Tea



Sugar  
Substitutes



Deli Meats &  
Wieners



Cheese



Raw Meat,  
Fish, Shellfish,  
& Eggs



Mercury in  
Fish



Sprouts &  
Unpasteurized  
Juice



Preparing  
Food Safely



# Caffeine



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# Caffeine

Too much caffeine can harm your baby.

Aim for **300 mg or less of caffeine daily** from **all** foods and drinks.

Examples of 300 mg caffeine include:

- 6 cups (1500 mL) of black or green tea
  - 2 cups (500 mL) coffee
- or**
- 2 cups (500 mL) coffee



Energy drinks are **not recommended** in pregnancy because of caffeine and other ingredients.





# Tea



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# Tea

You can safely drink up to **3 cups** (750 mL) of these **herbal teas** per day:



Ginger root



Peppermint



Orange peel



Rose hip

Black and green teas without herbs are **safe**.  
These teas have **caffeine**.

See the Caffeine card for more information.

**X** Other herbal teas may be unsafe.





# Sugar Substitutes



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# Sugar Substitutes

Sugar substitutes are found in food and drinks, like:



Sweetener packages



Diet pop



“No Sugar Added”  
candy & syrup

Most sugar substitutes are safe during pregnancy, such as:

- ✓ Aspartame
- ✓ Sucralose
- ✓ Xylitol, sorbitol, mannitol, and other sugar alcohols
- ✓ Stevia
- ✓ Acesulfame-K



Limit SWEET'N LOW® and Sugar Twin® to **2 packages daily** as their safety is unknown.







# Deli Meats & Wieners



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# Deli Meats & Wieners

Wieners or 'hot dogs' and some deli meats may have harmful bacteria. This may make you sick and could harm your baby.

**Heat** packaged and store-sliced deli meats **until steaming hot** to make them safe to eat.



It is **safe** to eat **dried** and **salted** deli meats without heating, like:



salami



pepperoni





# Cheese



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# Cheese

Cheese may have harmful bacteria. This may make you sick and could harm your baby.

✓ Hard **pasteurized** cheeses and processed cheeses are safe to eat.  
Examples:



Cheddar



Gouda



Swiss



Parmesan



Cottage  
cheese



Cheese  
slices



Heat soft **pasteurized** cheeses **until they steam**. These include:



- Brie
- Feta
- Queso Fresco
- Havarti
- Goat
- Paneer
- Gorgonzola
- Mozzarella



Avoid all **unpasteurized** cheese.





# Raw Meat, Fish, Shellfish, & Eggs



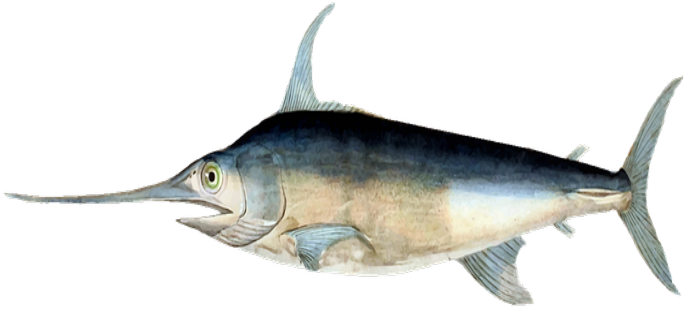
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# Raw Meat, Fish, Shellfish, & Eggs

Some raw, smoked, or lightly cooked foods can have harmful bacteria. This may make you sick and could harm your baby.

**Cook these foods well.**





# Mercury in Fish



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# Mercury in Fish



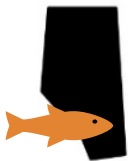
Most fish and shellfish have safe amounts of mercury.

They are **safe** to eat when you are pregnant.



Avoid these fish while you are pregnant:

- Escolar
- Canned 'white' tuna
- Marlin
- Fresh or frozen tuna
- Shark
- Orange roughy
- Swordfish



Limit or avoid some fish caught in Alberta lakes or rivers.

For more information, see the 'Resources' card.







# Sprouts & Unpasteurized Juice



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# Sprouts & Unpasteurized Juice

Sprouts and unpasteurized drinks may have harmful bacteria. This may make you sick and could harm your baby.



Choose fruit and vegetable juices and ciders with the word **“pasteurized”** on the label.



Avoid eating sprouts, such as:



Alfalfa  
sprouts



Bean sprouts  
(Mung bean)



Radish  
sprouts

**Cooking does not make sprouts safer.**





# Preparing Food Safely



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# Preparing Food Safely

## 1. Clean

- Wash your hands.
- Rinse vegetables/fruits well with safe drinkable water.
- Use clean cutting boards, dishes, and counters.



## 2. Separate

- Keep raw meat separate from other foods.



## 3. Cook

- Defrost frozen foods in the fridge or microwave and cook them right away.
- Do not defrost meat on the counter.
- Cook foods to the right temperature to kill bacteria that can make you sick.



## 4. Chill

- Keep cold foods cold.
- Put leftovers in the fridge **within 2 hours** of being cooked.



# Learn More

For more information, scan the QR code or visit:



Call **Health Link** at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on [ahs.ca/811](https://ahs.ca/811).



**Healthy Parents, Healthy Children:**  
Eating and Food Safety during Pregnancy  
[healthyparentshealthychildren.ca](https://healthyparentshealthychildren.ca)



**Healthy Parents, Healthy Children:**  
Breastfeeding Your Baby  
[healthyparentshealthychildren.ca](https://healthyparentshealthychildren.ca)



**Nutrition Handouts**  
[ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts](https://ahs.ca/NutritionHandouts)



**Nutrition for Pregnancy and Lactation**  
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## Food Safety in Pregnancy: Virtual Conversation Cards (May 2023)

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