### What is foodborne illness?

Pregnant women may have heard about foodborne illness outbreaks in the news — for example, caused by *E. coli* O157:H7 or *Listeria monocytogenes*. Often referred to as “food poisoning,” it’s a sickness that occurs when people eat or drink harmful microorganisms (bacteria, including their toxins; parasites; viruses) or chemical contaminants found in some foods or drinking water.

### Why should pregnant women be concerned about foodborne illness?

Pregnant women and their growing fetuses are at particularly high risk for foodborne illness because the mother's immune system is altered during pregnancy. Such an alteration may make it harder for the mother's body to fight off certain harmful foodborne microorganisms.

### How serious can foodborne illness be for pregnant women?

Foodborne illness during pregnancy can cause serious health problems, miscarriage, premature delivery, stillbirth, or even death of the mother. Different microorganisms or chemical contaminants can affect the mother and fetus or newborn in a variety of ways.

### Can foodborne illness harm the fetus?

Yes, harmful foodborne microorganisms or some metals in food can cross the placenta and cause harm to the developing fetus. As a result, the infected fetus or newborn can experience a wide range of health problems — or even death.

### What are the symptoms of foodborne illness?

Symptoms can vary, but may include stomach pain, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. Sometimes foodborne illness is confused with the flu because the symptoms can be flu-like with a fever, headache, and body aches.

### How soon can foodborne illness symptoms appear?

Eating a contaminated food will usually cause illness in one-to-three days, but sickness can also occur as soon as 20 minutes after ingestion . . . or as long as six weeks later. Exposure to some metals, such as methylmercury, may take months before any effects are seen because the mercury levels in the body may take time to build up.

### What should pregnant women do if they experience symptoms of foodborne illness?

Pregnant women who experience symptoms of foodborne illness should check with their doctor or healthcare provider immediately. And, if they become ill after eating out, they should also call their local health department, so the department can investigate to see if there's a serious foodborne illness outbreak in the area.

A doctor may perform a blood test or request a stool sample for testing. Maintaining hydration is an important part of the treatment, especially if the mother is vomiting and/or has diarrhea. Antibiotics that are safe to use during pregnancy may be prescribed by a doctor to get rid of the mother's infection. The antibiotics may also prevent infection of the fetus or newborn. Antibiotics may also be given to babies who are born with foodborne illness.

### How can pregnant women prevent foodborne illness?

That's what the Food Safety for Moms-to-Be program is all about! Preventing foodborne illness is really quite easy. All it takes is careful food selection and following these 4 Simple Steps . . .

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### Food Safety for Moms-to-Be

**CLEAN**

Wash hands and surfaces often.

**SEPARATE**

Don't cross contaminate.

**COOK**

Cook to proper temperatures.

**CHILL**

Refrigerate promptly.

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### NOTE

Pregnant women should see their doctor or healthcare provider if they have questions about foodborne illness.

Good food safety practices will benefit pregnant women and their families for a lifetime!
4 Simple Steps to Food Safety

Step 1 CLEAN
Wash Hands and Surfaces Often

Foodborne pathogens, such as bacteria, parasites, and viruses, are invisible without a microscope and can spread throughout the kitchen and get on cutting boards, utensils, sponges, countertops, and food. If eaten, harmful foodborne pathogens can cause foodborne illness. Clean hands and surfaces are the first step in safe food handling.

Clean Hands Are Key!
How to Wash Hands:
• Wet hands thoroughly with warm water and add soap.
• Thoroughly scrub hands, wrists, fingernails, and in between fingers — for at least 20 seconds.
• Rinse, then dry hands with a clean cloth towel or use a paper towel so the germs are thrown away.

When to Wash Hands:
• Before and after handling food.
• After using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets.

Keep these Handy . . .
• Make sure there are handwashing soap and paper towels or a clean cloth towel at every sink.
• If soap and water aren’t available, alcohol-based wipes or gel formulas are effective for sanitizing hands.

Surface Safety
• Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils (including knives), and countertops with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next food.
• Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. Then, throw the germs away with the towels! If cloth towels are used, launder them often using hot water.

Note: Don’t dry hands with a towel that was previously used to clean up raw meat, poultry, or seafood juices. These raw juices may contain harmful pathogens that can spread to hands and throughout the kitchen.

Sanitize It!
Periodically sanitize kitchen countertops using a kitchen sanitizer. One teaspoon of liquid chlorine bleach per quart of clean water can also be used to sanitize surfaces. Leave the bleach solution on the surface for about 10 minutes to be effective.

Step 2 SEPARATE
Separate, Don’t Cross-Contaminate

Raw animal foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, and unpasteurized milk products can contain harmful pathogens. Improper handling of these foods can set the stage for cross-contamination — the spread of pathogens from foods, hands, utensils, or food preparation surfaces to another food.

Safely Separate
• Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from ready-to-eat foods in the grocery shopping cart, refrigerator, and while preparing and handling foods at home. Consider placing these raw foods inside plastic bags in your grocery shopping cart to keep the juices contained.

Seal It
• To prevent juices from raw meat, poultry, or seafood from dripping onto other foods in the refrigerator, place these raw foods in sealed containers or sealable plastic bags.

Lather Up
• Thoroughly wash cutting boards, dishes, and utensils (including knives) with soap and hot water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, and unwashed fresh produce.

Clean Your Plate
• Place cooked food on a clean plate for serving. If cooked food is placed on an unwashed plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood, bacteria from the raw food could contaminate the cooked food.

Cutting Boards: Take Two
• If possible, use one cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood and another one for fresh fruits and vegetables.
• If two cutting boards aren’t available, prepare fruits and vegetables first, and put them safely out of the way. Wash the cutting board thoroughly with soap and hot water. Then, prepare the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Follow by washing the cutting board again.

Marinating Mandate
• Marinades used on raw meat, poultry, or seafood can contain harmful bacteria. Don’t re-use these marinades on cooked foods, unless they’re boiled first.
• Never taste uncooked marinade or sauce that was used to marinate raw meat, poultry, or seafood.

See the “Lifelong Food Safety” section of the website for more about the 4 Simple Steps to Food Safety.
4 Simple Steps to Food Safety

Step 3 COOK

Cook to Proper Temperatures

Heating foods to the right temperature for the proper amount of time kills harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Use a food thermometer to check the internal food temperature.

Meat and Poultry

- Cook ground beef, veal, lamb, and pork to at least 160°F (71° C).
- Cook turkey, chicken, and duck (whole, pieces, and ground) to 165°F (74° C).
- Cook beef, pork, veal, and lamb roasts and chops to at least 145°F (63° C), with a 3-minute rest time.

Eggs

- Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm.
- Cook fried eggs for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, 4 minutes in a covered pan.
- Cook scrambled eggs until they’re firm throughout.
- Don’t use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked, unless pasteurized eggs in the shell (or from a carton) are used. These eggs can be found in the refrigerator section of some local supermarkets and are labeled “pasteurized.”

Seafood

Finfish should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145°F (63° C). When a food thermometer is not available or appropriate, follow these tips to determine when seafood is done:

- Cook fish until it’s opaque (milky white) and flakes with a fork.
- Cook shrimp, lobster, and scallops until they reach their appropriate color. The flesh of shrimp and lobster should be an opaque (milky white) color. Scallops should be opaque (milky white) and firm.

- Cook clams, mussels, and oysters until their shells open. This means that they are done. Throw away the ones that didn’t open.
- Shucked clams and shucked oysters are fully cooked when they are opaque (milky white) and firm.

Leftovers

- Reheat leftovers to 165°F (74° C).
- Bring leftover sauces, soups, and gravies to a boil.
- Don’t leave food out at room temperature for more than two hours. On a hot day (90°F or higher), reduce this time to one hour.

Step 4 CHILL

Refrigerate Promptly

At room temperature, harmful bacteria can grow rapidly in food. The more bacteria there are, the greater the chances of becoming sick. Cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from multiplying, so keep perishable foods in the refrigerator. Note: *Listeria monocytogenes* is a harmful bacterium that can grow at refrigerator temperatures, see pages 8 and 9.

Cool Rules

- Your refrigerator should register at 40°F (4° C) or below and the freezer at 0°F (-18° C). Place a refrigerator thermometer in the refrigerator, and check the temperature periodically.
- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food, and leftovers within two hours of eating or preparation.
- Use ready-to-eat, perishable foods (dairy, meat, poultry, and seafood) as soon as possible.
- Hot food won’t harm your refrigerator, so it’s okay to place hot food inside. But, be sure to divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quicker cooling.
- Marinate foods in the refrigerator — not at room temperature.

Don’t Pack the Refrigerator . . .

- Don’t pack the refrigerator too full with food. Cold air must circulate to keep food safe.

. . . But Be Sure to Pack the Portable Cooler

- At outdoor events, use a portable cooler to keep perishable foods cold. And, fill the cooler with food and ice or cold packs. A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that’s partially filled.

For more information

See the “Lifelong Food Safety” section of the website for more about the 4 Simple Steps to Food Safety and the “Refrigerator and Freezer Storage” chart under “Chill,” which highlights the recommended storage times for foods.
Special Precautions for Moms-to-Be

Raw Eggs

Some eggs can be contaminated with *Salmonella Enteritidis*, a harmful bacterium. **Pregnant women should follow these tips:**

- Cook eggs thoroughly until the yolks and whites are firm. Cook fried eggs for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, or cook 4 minutes in a covered pan. Cook scrambled eggs until they’re firm throughout. Boil eggs in the shell for 7 minutes.
- Avoid eating or tasting foods that may contain raw or lightly-cooked eggs, such as:
  - Batter, filling, or raw cookie dough made with raw eggs
  - Eggnog and other egg-fortified beverages that are not thoroughly cooked
  - Dressings and sauces made with raw eggs:
    - Caesar salad dressing
    - Béarnaise sauce
    - Hollandaise sauce
    - Homemade mayonnaise
    - Ice cream
    - Mousse
    - Meringue

**Note:** Use store-bought forms of the foods listed, which are often already cooked or pasteurized, or make recipes that call for raw eggs safer by adding the eggs to the amount of liquid called for in the recipe, then heating the mixture thoroughly. Or, use pasteurized eggs in the shell or carton. These eggs may be found in the refrigerator section of some supermarkets and are labeled “pasteurized.”

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**Pasteurized Eggs in the Shell?**

Traditionally, eggs sold to consumers have not been pasteurized. Today, some manufacturers are pasteurizing eggs in the shell. This means heat is applied to the egg while it’s still in the shell! This process kills any harmful bacteria that might be present. Liquid pasteurized eggs may also be sold in cartons.

**Unpasteurized Milk**

Unpasteurized (raw) milk and soft cheeses made from unpasteurized milk may be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* or other harmful pathogens. Pregnant women should drink milk only if it is pasteurized, eat hard or processed cheeses, and eat soft cheeses only if they are made from pasteurized milk.

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**Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, Juices**

Harmful bacteria on the outside of fruits or vegetables can spread to the inside when produce is peeled, cut, or fresh-squeezed. Here’s how pregnant women can prevent foodborne illness from fruits, vegetables, and juices:

**Raw Fruits and Vegetables**

- Thoroughly rinse raw fruits and vegetables under running water before eating or preparing them, especially fruits that require peeling or cutting — like cantaloupe and other melons.
- As an added precaution, use a small produce brush to remove surface dirt. Try to cut away damaged or bruised areas — bacteria can thrive in these places.

**Raw Sprouts** (including alfalfa, clover, radish, and mung bean)

Bacteria can often get into the sprout seeds through cracks in the shell before sprouts are grown. Once this occurs, these bacteria are nearly impossible to wash out. To be safe:

- Avoid eating raw sprouts of any kind.
- Cook sprouts thoroughly.
- When eating out, check sandwiches and salads for raw sprouts. Request that raw sprouts not be added to your food.

**Juices**

- Only drink juices that have been pasteurized or otherwise treated to kill harmful bacteria.

**For more information**

See the “Safe Eats” section of the website for more detailed food safety tips by food category.
# Foodborne Risks for Moms-to-Be

## How Methylmercury Could Affect an Unborn Child

### What is methylmercury?
Methylmercury is a metal that can be found in certain fish. The methylmercury in these fish can be harmful to unborn babies if these fish are eaten by pregnant women. Mercury occurs naturally in the environment and can also be released into the air through industrial pollution. It falls from the air and can get into surface water, accumulating in streams and oceans. Bacteria in the water cause chemical changes that transform mercury into methylmercury, which can be toxic. Fish absorb methylmercury as they feed on aquatic organisms.

### Is there methylmercury in all fish?
Nearly all fish contain traces of methylmercury. However, larger fish that have lived longer have the highest levels of methylmercury because they’ve had more time to accumulate it. These large fish pose the greatest risk to pregnant women who eat them regularly.

### How can pregnant women become exposed to methylmercury?
Fish in the diet is the major source of methylmercury, and eating certain types of fish leads to the accumulation of methylmercury in the body. Methylmercury can build up in the bloodstream, and can then pass from the mother’s blood into that of her unborn child. Methylmercury is removed from the body naturally, but it may take over a year to drop to a safe level. Thus, it may be present in a woman even before she becomes pregnant. This is one of the reasons women who are trying to become pregnant should also avoid eating certain types of fish.

### How can pregnant women tell if they’ve been exposed to methylmercury?
The mother will not show noticeable symptoms from eating commercial seafood, but her newborn may experience symptoms (see next question).

### How can methylmercury affect an unborn baby or young child?
For most people, the risk from methylmercury by eating fish and shellfish is not a health concern. Yet, some fish and shellfish contain higher levels of methylmercury that may harm an unborn baby or young child’s developing nervous system.

### What types of fish should pregnant women — or women trying to become pregnant — avoid eating?
These women, along with nursing mothers and young children, should not eat the following fish, as they can contain high levels of methylmercury:
- Swordfish
- Tilefish
- King mackerel
- Shark

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 methylmercury.
- Five of the most commonly eaten fish and shellfish that are low in methylmercury are shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish.
- Another commonly eaten fish, albacore (“white”) tuna has more methylmercury 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.
**Foodborne Risks for Moms-to-Be**

**Listeria monocytogenes: A Hidden Threat to Moms-to-Be and Their Babies**

| What is *Listeria monocytogenes*? | *Listeria monocytogenes* is a harmful bacterium that can be found in the following sources:  
• Raw or undercooked animal foods such as unpasteurized milk, unpasteurized milk products (for example, soft and blue veined cheeses), meat, poultry, and seafood.  
• Refrigerated, ready-to-eat foods such as hot dogs, deli meats, luncheon meats, poultry, and seafood  
• Contaminated fresh fruits (e.g., cantaloupes) and vegetables  
• Produce harvested from soil contaminated with *L. monocytogenes*.  
Many animals can carry this bacterium without appearing ill, and thus, it can be found in foods made from animals. *L. monocytogenes* is unusual because it can grow at refrigerator temperatures, whereas most other foodborne bacteria do not. When eaten, it may cause listeriosis, an illness to which pregnant women and their unborn child are very susceptible. |
|---|---|
| How can pregnant women get listeriosis? | Pregnant women can get listeriosis by eating foods, such as those listed above, that are contaminated with *L. monocytogenes*. Pregnant women can also get listeriosis by eating contaminated foods processed or packaged in unsanitary conditions or by eating fruits and vegetables that are contaminated from the soil or from manure used as fertilizer. **FACT**  
• Most *L. monocytogenes* infections occur during the third trimester of pregnancy. At this stage of pregnancy, the mother is more susceptible to listeriosis. However, *L. monocytogenes* infections that occur during the first trimester of pregnancy tend to have more severe fetal consequences.  
• The serious effects of listeriosis in pregnancy are often manifested by the fetus or newborn rather than the pregnant woman. |
| How can listeriosis affect pregnant women? | The symptoms can take a few days or even weeks to appear and may include: fever, chills, muscle aches, diarrhea or upset stomach, headache, stiff neck, confusion, and loss of balance. If a pregnant woman experiences any of the above symptoms, she should see her doctor or healthcare provider immediately. In more serious cases, listeriosis could lead to the mother’s death.  
Most of the time, pregnant women who have listeriosis experience no symptoms and don’t feel sick. Thus, they can pass the infection to their unborn babies without even knowing it. That’s why prevention of listeriosis is very important. |
| How can listeriosis affect fetuses or newborns? | Although most *L. monocytogenes* infections occur during the third trimester of pregnancy, in the first trimester they can cause more severe consequences—including miscarriage. They can also lead to premature labor, delivery of a low-birth-weight infant, or infant death.  
Fetuses who have a late infection may develop a wide range of health problems, including mental retardation, paralysis, seizures, blindness, or impairments of the brain, heart, or kidney. In newborns, *L. monocytogenes* can cause blood infections and meningitis. **FACT**  
*L. monocytogenes* is one of the most common causes of miscarriage resulting from infection of the fetus. |

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*S·T·A·T·S*  
• Pregnant women are about 10 times more likely than other healthy adults to get listeriosis.  
• It’s estimated that about one in seven (14%) of all *Listeria monocytogenes* cases occur in pregnant women.  
— Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
How Pregnant Women Can Reduce the Risk of Listeriosis

Time to Chill Fridge Tips
- Your refrigerator should register at 40º F (4º C) or below and the freezer at 0º F (-18º C). Place a refrigerator thermometer in the refrigerator, and check the temperature periodically. During the automatic defrost cycle, the temperature may temporarily register slightly higher than 40º F. This is okay.
- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food, and leftovers within two hours of eating or preparation. Follow the 2-Hour Rule: Discard food that's left out at room temperature for longer than two hours. When temperatures are above 90º F (32º C), discard food after one hour.
- Use ready-to-eat, perishable foods, such as dairy, meat, poultry, seafood, and produce, as soon as possible. Remember, Listeria monocytogenes grows at refrigerator temperatures, so the longer a food is in the refrigerator the more bacteria it will contain.

Fridge Tips
- Clean your refrigerator regularly.
- Wipe up spills immediately.
- Clean the inside walls and shelves with hot water and a mild liquid dishwashing detergent; then rinse.
- Once a week, check expiration and “use by” dates, and throw out foods if the date has passed. Follow the recommended storage times for foods. See the “Lifelong Food Safety” section of the website for the “Refrigerator & Freezer Storage” chart. Click on “Chill.”

To Eat or Not to Eat?

Don’t eat:
- Soft cheeses like Feta, Brie, Camembert, “blue-veined cheeses,” or “queso blanco,” “queso fresco,” or Panela — unless they’re made with pasteurized milk. Make sure the label says, “made with pasteurized milk.”
- Hot dogs, deli meats, and luncheon meats — unless they’re reheated until steaming hot.
- Refrigerated pâté or meat spreads.
- Refrigerated smoked seafood — unless it’s in a cooked dish, such as a casserole. (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.)
- Unpasteurized (raw) milk or foods that contain it.

It’s okay to eat:
- Canned or shelf-stable (able to be stored unrefrigerated on the shelf) pâtés and meat spreads.
- Canned or shelf-stable, smoked seafood.
- Pasteurized milk or foods that contain it.

Listeriosis & Pregnant Hispanic Women

Studies show that Hispanic pregnant women may have a higher incidence of listeriosis than pregnant non-Hispanic women. This is most likely because they might make and eat homemade soft cheese and other traditional foods made from unpasteurized milk. “Queso fresco” — a traditional homemade cheese prepared from unpasteurized milk and widely consumed by Hispanics — has led to miscarriages, death of newborns, and premature delivery caused by L. monocytogenes.

To reduce the risk of listeriosis, Hispanic pregnant women should not eat homemade soft cheeses and other traditional foods made from unpasteurized milk. Like all other pregnant women, they should follow the food safety precautions above.

NOTE: Pregnant women should see their doctor or healthcare provider if they have questions about listeriosis.
Foodborne Risks for Moms-to-Be

Toxoplasma gondii: A Parasite That Can Harm Mother and Baby

What is Toxoplasma gondii? 
Toxoplasma gondii is a parasite found in raw and undercooked meat; unwashed fruits and vegetables; contaminated water; dust; soil; dirty cat-litter boxes; and outdoor places where cat feces can be found. It can cause an illness called toxoplasmosis, which can be particularly harmful to pregnant women and their unborn babies.

How can pregnant women get toxoplasmosis?
They can get this illness by . . .
• Eating raw or undercooked meat, especially pork, lamb, or venison, or by touching their hands to their mouth after handling undercooked meat.
• Using contaminated knives, utensils, cutting boards and foods that have had contact with raw meat.
• Drinking water contaminated with T. gondii.
• Accidentally ingesting contaminated cat feces, which can occur if they touch their hands to their mouth after gardening, cleaning a litter box, or touching anything that comes in contact with cat feces.

How can toxoplasmosis affect pregnant women?
Symptoms typically include: swollen glands, fever, headache, muscle pain, or a stiff neck. Toxoplasmosis can be difficult to detect. Some women infected with the parasite may not have noticeable symptoms — so a pregnant woman can easily expose her fetus to toxoplasmosis without even being aware that she’s ill. That’s why prevention of toxoplasmosis is very important. If the mother experiences any of the above symptoms, she should see her doctor or healthcare provider immediately.

Pregnant women with HIV are particularly at risk for developing toxoplasmosis.

How can toxoplasmosis affect fetuses or newborns?
Infants born to mothers who became infected with T. gondii for the first time just before or during pregnancy are at risk for severe toxoplasmosis. An infection during the first trimester, when the central nervous system is being formed, may be fatal to the fetus. An infection that occurs as the pregnancy progresses may be relatively mild.

In babies, T. gondii can cause hearing loss, mental retardation, and blindness. Some children can develop brain or eye problems years after birth. Children born infected with T. gondii can also require years of special care, including special education and ophthalmology care. Early identification and treatment of children infected with T. gondii is essential in order to minimize the parasite’s effects.

STATS
• About 85% of pregnant women in the U.S. are at risk of being infected with toxoplasmosis.
  — American Journal of Epidemiology
• Women infected with T. gondii during pregnancy can transmit the infection across the placenta to their fetuses. The risk of congenital disease is lowest (10-25%) when acute maternal infection occurs during the first trimester and highest (60-90%) when acute maternal infection occurs during the third trimester. However, the severity of disease is worse if infection is acquired in the first trimester . . . Most infants infected in utero are born with no obvious signs of toxoplasmosis on routine examination, but up to 80% develop learning and visual disabilities later in life if they are followed into adulthood.
  — Obstetrical and Gynecological Survey

• It’s estimated that toxoplasmosis infects between 400 and 4,000 fetuses in the U.S. each year.
  — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
• By age 20, as many as 80% of children born with toxoplasmosis that was left untreated develop impairments ranging from mental retardation to blindness.
  — Council for Agricultural Science and Technology
• About 50% of toxoplasmosis infections in the U.S. each year are acquired from food.
  — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
How Pregnant Women Can Prevent Toxoplasmosis

CLEAN
• Wash hands with soap and warm water after touching soil, sand, raw meat, cat litter, or unwashed fruits and vegetables.
• Wash all cutting boards and knives thoroughly with soap and hot water after each use.
• Thoroughly wash and/or peel all fruits and vegetables before eating them.

SEPARATE
• Separate raw meat from other foods in the grocery shopping cart, refrigerator, and while preparing and handling foods at home.

COOK
• Cook meat thoroughly.
• Check the internal temperature of meat with a food thermometer.
• Don’t sample meat until it’s cooked.

Don’t Drink the Water!
Avoid drinking untreated water, particularly when traveling in less-developed countries.

For Cat-Lovers . . .
A pregnant woman doesn’t have to give her cat away, but she should be aware that *T. gondii* infects essentially all cats that spend any time outdoors. Cats get this parasite by eating small animals or raw meat that’s been infected. The parasite is then passed on through the cat’s feces. It doesn’t make the cat sick, so a pregnant woman may not know if her cat has the parasite.

Follow these tips:
• If possible, have someone else change the litter box. If a pregnant woman has to clean it, she should wear disposable gloves and wash her hands thoroughly with soap and warm water afterwards.
• Change the litter box daily. The parasite doesn’t become infectious until one-to-five days after it’s shed in the feces.
• Wear gloves when gardening or handling sand from a sandbox because cats may have excreted feces in them. Be sure to wash hands with soap and warm water afterwards.
• Cover outdoor sandboxes to prevent cats from using them as litter boxes.
• Feed cats commercial dry or canned food. Never feed cats raw meat because it can be a source of the *T. gondii* parasite.
• Keep indoor cats indoors. Be especially cautious if outdoor cats are brought indoors.
• Avoid stray cats, especially kittens.
• Don’t get a new cat during pregnancy.

NOTE
If pregnant women have a cat and are concerned about exposure to *T. gondii*, they should talk to their doctor or healthcare provider.