

## **Soft Cheeses During Pregnancy**

As a pregnant woman, you should be aware that certain soft cheeses can become contaminated with bacteria called *Listeria*. If you become sick from *Listeria*, the baby you're carrying could get sick or die. To protect your unborn baby, eat hard cheeses instead of soft cheeses while you are pregnant.

Soft cheeses that can easily become contaminated include:

### **Mexican Style Soft Cheeses**

- queso blanco
- queso fresco
- queso de hoja
- queso de crema
- asadero

### **Other Soft Cheeses:**

- Feta
- Brie
- Camembert
- Blue-Veined Cheeses, like Roquefort

*Listeria* can also contaminate other foods. Contaminated food may not look, smell or taste different from uncontaminated food.

Symptoms of infection can develop from 2 to 30 days after you eat contaminated food. If the infection spreads to your unborn baby, you could start early labor. **Tell your doctor right away if you get any of these symptoms:**

- fever and chills, or other flu like symptoms
- headache
- nausea
- vomiting

Although *Listeria* bacteria are killed with thorough cooking, these “tough bugs” can grow in the refrigerator and survive in the freezer.

To prevent an infection, take these precautions:

- Use hard cheeses, like cheddar, instead of soft cheeses during pregnancy
- If you do use soft cheeses during pregnancy, cook them until they are boiling (bubbling)
- Use only pasteurized dairy products. It will state “pasteurized” on the label
- If you do use hard cheeses made from unpasteurized milk, use only those marked “aged 60 days” or longer.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked meat, poultry or seafood
- Thoroughly reheat all meats purchased at deli counters, including cured meats like salami, before eating them
- Wash all fruits and vegetables with water
- Follow label instructions on products that must be refrigerated or that have a “use-by” date
- Keep the inside of the refrigerator, counter tops, and utensils clean
- After handling raw foods, wash your hands with warm soapy water, and wash the utensil you used with hot soapy water before using them again

If you have questions about *Listeria* call 1-800-332-4010 (FDA)

Department of Health and Human Services Food and Drug Administration