



## Keep Your Baby Safe:

**Eat Hard Cheeses  
Instead of Soft Cheeses  
During Pregnancy**

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

As a pregnant woman, eating for two, 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 (goat cheese)  
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 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 utensils you used with hot soapy water before using them again.

Do you have questions about *Listeria*? Call (1-800) FDA-4010.

Department of Health and Human Services  
Food and Drug Administration (HFI-40)  
Rockville, MD 20857



DHHS Publication No. 96-2304S  
June 1996