



While Pregnant, Be Careful with Queso Fresco

Know the facts

Listeria is one of the main causes of death from food poisoning in the United States. Almost all of the people who get really sick or die from *Listeria* infections are newborns, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems.

Pasteurization is the process of heating milk to a high enough temperature for a long enough time to kill harmful bacteria, like *Listeria*, contained in milk.

Many outbreaks of *Listeria* in the United States were linked to soft cheeses, like queso fresco, made from unpasteurized milk. Pasteurization kills the germs in milk. But if cheese is made in an unclean place, it can still get contaminated with *Listeria*.

Listeria infection in pregnant women can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, or death of the newborn. Pregnant women are about 10 times more likely than the general public to get *Listeria* infection. But if you are pregnant and Hispanic, your risk is even greater!

Pregnant Hispanic women are about **24 times** more likely than the general population to get *Listeria* infection.

Reduce your risk during pregnancy to protect your baby.

- Do not eat soft cheeses, such as queso fresco, while pregnant, unless they are made with pasteurized milk, to lower the risk of getting infection from *Listeria* or other foodborne germs.
- Be aware that some cheeses, such as queso fresco, that were made from pasteurized milk but were contaminated when the cheese was being made, have also caused *Listeria* infections.

Hispanic-style soft cheeses include queso fresco, queso blanco, queso blando, queso cotija, queso panela, queso ranchero, and cuajada en terrón.

Queso fresco made with pasteurized milk



Only buy soft cheeses with the word "pasteurized" on the label.

For more information about *Listeria* visit www.cdc.gov/listeria.

