

Pregnant or Thinking About Getting Pregnant?

You can prevent infection and help keep your unborn baby safe. Here's how:

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially when using the bathroom, handling pets, touching raw meat, raw eggs or unwashed vegetables, being around people who are sick, getting saliva (spit) on your hands, preparing food and eating, caring for and playing with children, gardening or touching dirt or soil, and changing diapers. If soap and running water are not available, you may use alcohol-based hand gel.

2. Try not to share forks, cups, or food with young children. Wash your hands often when around children. Their saliva and urine might contain a virus. It is likely harmless to them, but it can be dangerous for you and your unborn baby.

3. Cook your meat until it's well done. The juices should run clear and there should be no pink inside. Do not eat hot dogs, luncheon meats, or deli meats, unless they are reheated until steaming hot. These undercooked meats and processed meats might contain harmful bacteria.

4. Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and foods made from it. Do not eat soft cheeses such as feta, brie, and queso fresco unless they have labels that say they are pasteurized. Unpasteurized products can contain harmful bacteria.

5. Do not touch or change dirty cat litter. Have someone else do it. If you must change the litter yourself, be sure to wear gloves and wash your hands afterwards. Dirty cat litter might contain a harmful parasite.

6. Stay away from wild or pet rodents and their droppings. Have a pest control professional get rid of pests in or around your home. If you have a pet rodent, like a hamster or guinea pig, have someone else care for it until after your baby arrives. Some rodents might carry a harmful virus.

7. Get tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), such as HIV and hepatitis B, and protect yourself from them. Some people that have HIV, hepatitis B, or an STD do not feel sick. Knowing if you have one of these diseases is important. If you do, talk to your doctor about how you can reduce the chance that your baby will become sick.

8. Talk to your doctor about vaccinations (shots). Some are recommended before you become pregnant, during pregnancy, or right after delivery. Having the right vaccinations at the right time can help keep you healthy and help keep your baby from getting very sick or having life-long health problems.

9. Avoid people who have an infection. Stay away from people who you know have infections, such as chickenpox or rubella, if you have not yet had it yourself or did not have the vaccine before pregnancy.

10. Ask your doctor about group B strep. About 1 in 4 women carry this type of bacteria, but do not feel sick. An easy swab test near the end of pregnancy will show if you have this type of bacteria. If you do have group B strep, talk to your doctor about how to protect your baby during labor.

To learn more about any of these tips, visit www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy_gateway/infection.htm and follow the links to more information. If you think you might have an infection or think you are at risk, see your doctor. This is not a complete guide to a healthy pregnancy. Be sure to talk with your doctor to learn more about safe food preparation, wearing insect repellent when outside, taking medicine, and other important topics.