



Detailed food safety information online

My daughter recently learned she is pregnant, and I know food safety is an important issue during pregnancy. Where can we find good resources to make sure she doesn't eat anything that inadvertently would put her or her baby at risk?

You're right. Pregnant women are among the high-risk groups of people who have to be extra careful to avoid food-borne illness. During pregnancy, the immune system is weakened and that makes it harder for the body's natural defenses to protect both mother and fetus from microorganisms.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's newly updated food safety web site, <http://foodsafety.gov>, offers both at-a-glance and in-depth resources on food safety information for women who are pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant. Just click on "Keep Food Safe," then "For Specific Groups of People." It offers basic steps for keeping food safe, as well as information on specific risks related to pregnancy, such as *Listeria*, methylmercury and toxoplasma.

Other at-risk groups who can find targeted information on the Web site include older adults and persons with chronic illnesses. And foodsafety.gov offers a boatload of other information on just about anything you can think of related to food safety. Among the offerings:

- Basic information on food safety according to types of food (Meat, Poultry and Fish; Eggs and Dairy Products; and Fruits and Vegetables).
- Information on food recalls, including links to both the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration's recalls and alerts.
- Easy-to-read charts with information on food storage times and minimum cooking temperatures.
- Emergency information, with links to detailing how to keep food safe during a power outage (take a look and print these out before the electricity goes out!) and in other emergencies.
- Seasonal food safety tips, including guidelines for back-to-school, summer and holidays.
- Food poisoning, including information about common causes of food poisoning and links to detailed information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health. This page also tells you where to report suspected cases of food-borne illness.
- Ask the experts. The site contains e-mail addresses of whom to contact with food safety questions.

The site also contains downloadable educational materials, news releases, and industry information related to inspections and compliance. Check it out the next time you have a food safety question or concern.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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