

# What Not to Eat

Eating healthy means avoiding foods and drinks that could hurt you and your baby.

BY DENISE SCHIPANI

From your first prenatal appointment, you'll hear all about what you should be eating and drinking. You'll learn that calcium is crucial for your baby's bones—and yours. And you'll surely get the message that you need folic acid to prevent certain birth defects. But what about foods to avoid? Advice seems to flip-flop from year to year, and things that were considered perfectly safe five years ago may now be on the no-no list. Here's a look at what to cut out for the next nine months.

## CAFFEINE

Taking in high doses of caffeine daily during pregnancy—whether from coffee, tea, cola, cocoa, or energy drinks—has long been associated with an increased risk of miscarriage, and a 2008 study from the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research confirms that link. The study found that women who consumed 200 milligrams or more of caffeine per day (that's two or more cups of regular coffee or five 12-ounce cans of soda containing caffeine) had twice the miscarriage risk as women who consumed no caffeine. "It's a good idea to drink decaffeinated beverages, especially during the first trimester when the risk of miscarriage is highest," says Bridget Swinney, R.D., author of *Eating Expectantly*.

## SOFT CHEESES

It's best to avoid cheeses such as Brie, goat, Camembert, feta, queso blanco, and blue or other veined varieties. Why?



They may be unpasteurized and contaminated with *Listeria*—bacteria that can trigger food poisoning. These soft cheeses have a high fear factor because they're not aged, like cheddar or Parmesan, where the process kills bacteria naturally, says Hope Ricciotti, M.D., associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Harvard Medical School and coauthor of *I'm Pregnant! Now What Do I Eat?* And because pregnant women have a weakened immune system, they are more prone to certain food-borne illnesses—which, if contracted in the first trimester, can lead to miscarriage or preterm birth.

## MEAT

Buying cold cuts at the deli for this week's lunches? Be careful; deli products might become contaminated with *Listeria* if they're not handled properly at the manufacturing plant or at the deli itself. As a precaution, heat store-made deli meats until

★ Always check the expiration date on the package to make sure food is fresh—and when in doubt, throw it out.