

Avoiding Infections in Pregnancy

- **Handwashing:** Make sure to wash your hands before and after touching raw foods and eating, after using the bathroom, after changing a diaper or assisting a child with toileting, after wiping a young child's nose or drool, after handling garbage or dirty laundry, after touching animals or pets, after handling children's toys, after contact with another person's saliva and after gardening or touching dirt/soil. When washing your hands, make sure to wet your hands with water before applying soap, rub together for at least 15-30 seconds, (paying special attention to your fingernails, wrists, and between your fingers), rinse thoroughly, and ideally, dry with a single use towel. Alcohol based rubs may be used as an alternative when hands are NOT visibly soiled.
- **Food Precautions:** Avoid products made with unpasteurized milk, raw cookie dough or cake batter, raw or undercooked meat, shellfish or fish, unpasteurized juice or cider, cold deli meats, raw sprouts, store made meat/seafood salads, soft cheeses. Always wash raw fruits and vegetables.
- **Insect Borne Illnesses:** Take precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Products with 10-35% DEET are safe to use in pregnancy.
- **Travel:** Avoid travel to high risk locations, especially those known to have the Zika virus. The CDC website has an updated list of locations to avoid. If you are planning international travel, please speak to your OB to review any specific precautions that should be taken.
- **Immunizations:** You should make sure you are up to date with all immunizations prior to your pregnancy. During your pregnancy, it is important to receive the flu vaccine, as the influenza virus affects pregnant women differently, and can lead to serious illness and complications. Between 27 and 36 weeks of pregnancy, you will receive the Tdap booster, which vaccinates against tetanus, pertussis and diphtheria. The CDC recommends this booster with each pregnancy in order to provide the fetus with passive immunity, as the newborn infant cannot be vaccinated until 2 months of age. You should also make sure that all family members and friends that will be in close contact with the infant are up to date with their vaccinations, including Tdap. Columbia Presbyterian Hospital will provide up to 11 family members with Tdap boosters at the time of delivery, free of charge.
- **Animal borne illnesses:** Avoid contact with all rodents and rodent droppings. Avoid changing cat litter. If you must, wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly.
- **General hygiene:** In addition to the handwashing guidelines reviewed above, avoid contact with saliva and urine of other people, including all small children. Do not share food, drinks or eating utensils with young children. Do not put their pacifier in your mouth, do not share their toothbrush, avoid contact with their saliva when kissing them, and make sure to clean all toys, countertops and surfaces that come in contact with their saliva or urine. These guidelines are important to avoid contracting viruses that have been shown to cause serious complications in pregnancy.
- **STI:** Safe sexual practices should be continued throughout pregnancy