

Expectant mothers face unique challenges during the holidays

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(Medical Xpress) -- Some people look at the holidays as a time to throw caution to the wind. Pregnant women, however, should be mindful of what food, drink and activities they chose to partake of every day—especially during holiday celebrations.

"It's easy to get swept up in the holidays, but it's important to remember to take care of yourself and your baby," says UC Health maternal-fetal medicine specialist Ron Jaekle, MD.

When it comes to holiday tips, the advice Jaekle gives to expectant mothers is founded in both science and common sense.

Travel, whether by plane, train or automobile, tops the list of cautionary practices, he says.

Most women know to ask their obstetrician whether they can fly or not, which is dependent on the individual patient and where they are in their pregnancy, but few people think to ask about long car trips. One of the most common things that people do during the [holidays](#) is travel, and moms, Jaekle says, need to stretch their legs about every 45 minutes to minimize the risk of getting a blood clot.

"If you decide at the last minute to drive to your mother-in-law's house five hours away without stopping, that's not a good choice. If you do go, then you need to take the time to get out and stretch," he says.

Expectant mothers shouldn't feel obligated to try everything or attend every holiday function, he says. Getting plenty of rest is essential to the health of both mother and child, so make sure there is a place you can sit down and prop up your feet.

Holiday food and drink can also be an issue, so it's best to find out exactly what is in all items on the menu.

"During pregnancy is not a good time to be trying foods that are made with unpasteurized dairy products or raw eggs such as in eggnogs," he says, because raw and undercooked eggs can contain salmonella, a cause of food poisoning. Be careful as well with the foods on holiday trays.

Party trays, as Jaekle explains, very often include soft cheeses such as feta, brie and queso fresco and lunchmeats or cold cuts which can all contain harmful bacteria and cause infections such as listeriosis.

"Listeria grows best in the refrigerator and these items sit longer in the refrigerator," he says, adding that hard cheeses such as cheddar, Gouda or Swiss are the safe choices.

Although most [pregnant women](#) know to stay away from the kitty litter box when pregnant, they might not know that the same parasite in cat feces (the *Toxoplasma gondii* parasite) can also be present in deer meat.

While Rudolph is not a staple on the average holiday menu, Christmas Cheer—cocktails, beer and wine—always abounds, and the best bet is to avoid to avoid all alcohol PERIOD, Jaekle says. There is little reason to be alarmed by alcohol used in recipes, he says, but his rule of thumb regarding a rum-soaked fruitcake is: "If you can feel the effects the baby can feel it, so don't do it."

Lastly, he advises: "This probably isn't a good time to take up unfamiliar

activities such as ice skating or sled riding." Opt for a carriage ride instead.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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