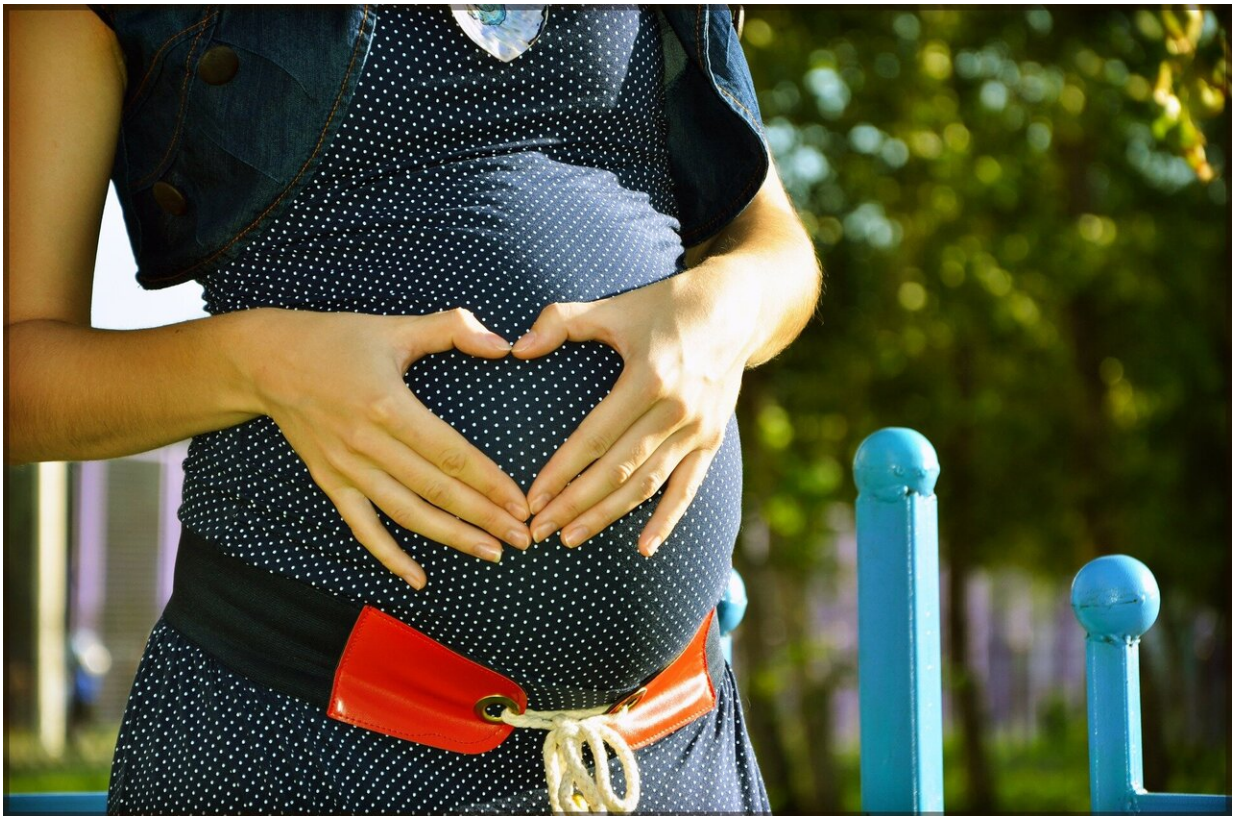


# Pregnancy is no picnic when it comes to listeria

June 20 2022, by Deedee Stiepan

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Food safety is important for everybody, but it is especially important if you're expecting. Hormonal changes during pregnancy can change a pregnant person's immune system, making her more susceptible to

contracting foodborne illness.

In this Mayo Clinic Minute, Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse, a Mayo Clinic pediatric infectious diseases expert, discusses the risks associated with [listeria](#) and what summertime foods should be avoided by those who are expecting.

Planning a picnic is no walk in the park for those who are pregnant. That's because many foods associated with summertime carry an increased risk of listeria.

"Listeria is a type of bacteria that is usually transmitted through food and food products. It is especially a concern if you're pregnant, if you're elderly or if you have a weakened immune system for some reason," says Dr. Rajapakse.

Listeria is a concern for pregnant people because of the risk of transmitting the infection on to the unborn baby.

"It can have really severe outcomes for babies, including risks of stillbirth or death," she says.

Deli meats, hot dogs and soft serve ice cream are foods typically associated with listeria. However, even foods that might be considered healthy for expecting mothers can carry a listeria risk.

"I looked back at the last few years of listeria outbreaks, and some of the more recent ones were related to bagged salads or packaged salads," says Dr. Rajapakse.

With such a wide variety of different foods that can become contaminated with listeria, how can you keep yourself and your baby safe?

When it comes to deli meats and [hot dogs](#), make sure they are cooked to 165 degrees F. Fruits and vegetables should be washed well. And keep an eye out for reported outbreaks linked to certain foods.

The symptoms of listeria can be things like fever, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain. It can cause a flu-like illness in [pregnant women](#), so aches and pains, joint aches and pains, and fatigue, as well.

If you suspect that you could have a [foodborne illness](#), contact your health care professional right away.

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