



Congratulations! Your baby is moving up to solids, an important step on the way to becoming a toddler. Now, you need to be aware of new trends in potentially deadly diseases that can be spread by foods. At the moment, there are no shots that can protect your child from these diseases. You are your child's best defense as he begins a lifetime of healthy eating.

What Every Parent Needs to Know About Foodborne Illness

Foodborne Diseases

A disease is called "foodborne" because a person most often becomes ill from eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated with germs from dirt, animal feces or human feces. However, once these germs infect a person, they can be transferred to other people. Thus, "foodborne" diseases can be spread by people, changing tables, daycare centers, or swimming pools. The spread of germs may be prevented with thorough handwashing.

In babies or children, today's foodborne

disease germs like *Salmonella* and *E. coli O157:H7* can cause serious, life-threatening illness within hours or days.

To kill foodborne germs it is important to cook foods to the proper temperatures. To prevent foodborne disease in your family, it is also important to refrigerate leftovers immediately, and clean surfaces, counters, utensils, and hands often. Use separate knives, utensils, plates and cutting boards for raw meats, poultry and fish because the juices may contain germs. These germs can contaminate fruit and vegetables and cooked meats if the same equipment is used.

As a parent, you need to pay special attention to the following types of foods:

- **Soft, Unprocessed Cheeses - Do Not Serve To Children**

Soft cheeses made from unpasteurized milk such as queso fresco, feta, brie, and blue cheese can harbor a germ called *Listeria*. In babies, it can cause a brain infection which can lead to brain damage. In pregnant women, it can cause stillbirth very late in a pregnancy. Be sure the soft cheeses you give to your baby have been made from pasteurized milk.

- **Poultry and Ground Meats - Must Be Cooked Completely Through**

When an animal is slaughtered and butchered, the meat may come into contact with germs from animal feces. On many meats these germs will be on the outside where they can be killed with cooking.

However, in whole poultry, hamburger or chopped, mixed meats like hotdogs, bologna or salami, the germs can be on the inside. Hamburger should be heated to 160 degrees inside to kill *E. coli* bacteria. It is very important to use a thermometer (instant T-stick types are great for this) since you CANNOT tell if it's cooked enough by its color. Poultry should be heated to 180 degrees inside to kill *Salmonella*. Hotdogs and coldcuts, although already cooked, should be heated until steaming to kill *Listeria*.

- **Fish, Sushi, and Shellfish: Must Be Cooked Completely Through**

Shellfish such as shrimp, crab, clams, and oysters can contain life-threatening bacteria and viruses. Raw fish like that found in sushi can contain parasites.

Children should not eat, sample or taste raw or lightly cooked seafood products, particularly oysters.

- **Unpasteurized Milk or Juice - Serve Only Pasteurized Juices and Milk**

Raw milk can contain germs including *Salmonella* and *E. coli O157:H7*. Mass produced fresh juices, including aguas frescas and smoothies, may contain fruit that has come into contact with dirt or contaminated water. Pasteurization is a heat process that kills germs in liquids. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advise that children should drink only pasteurized juices and milk.

- **Honey - Do Not Serve To Children Under Age One**

Honey can contain a spore that causes botulism, a disease that causes increasing paralysis. The AAP recommends that children under one year of age should not be given honey unless the product has been certified to be free of *C. botulinum* spores.

- **Eggs - Must Be Cooked Until Dry**

The eggs you buy can contain *Salmonella* inside the shell. To kill *Salmonella*, eggs must be cooked thoroughly, hard boiled or scrambled until dry. Examples of foods that contain undercooked eggs are: souffles, eggs sunny side up, soft boiled eggs, fresh Caesar salad dressing, some homemade frostings, raw cookie and cake batter, and French toast. Children should eat only thoroughly cooked eggs and egg products.

- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetables - Inspect and Rinse Thoroughly**

When choosing fresh fruit and vegetables, always look for undamaged produce which does not show signs of being dropped, caked-on dirt or contact with birds or worms. Rinse fresh fruit and vegetables thoroughly under running, potable water. Children should not consume uncooked sprouts because sprouts have caused frequent outbreaks of *Salmonella* and *E. coli O157:H7*. Check the latest FDA advisories for different types of produce or visit: www.cfsan.fda.gov.

*U*se Caution With These Places

- **Swimming: Pools**

Sick children who swim in public pools

can spread their germs to the water. Healthy children that drink swimming pool water can then get the same germs. Be sure to ask your public swimming pool manager whether they are putting enough chlorine in the pool.

- **Swimming: Lakes and Other Bodies of Fresh Water**

Be sure that fresh bodies of water in which your children swim are approved as safe by contacting local health authorities and verifying the conditions of the water.

- **Potlucks, Parties and Picnics**

Other people may not be aware of the new information about foodborne germs. Ask what foods are being served and be careful that the food has been prepared safely when you send your child to birthday parties, community potlucks, or picnics.

- **Restaurants**

If a restaurant serves your child a food that is undercooked, send it back. Do not frequent a restaurant that looks dirty.

- **Daycare and Public Changing Tables**

Be sure that your daycare providers understand the risks of foodborne germs. Changing tables should be cleaned frequently and workers should wash their hands every time after

changing diapers and before preparing food. Do not put your child directly on a public changing table.

If Your Child Gets Diarrhea...

Your child will have diarrheal illnesses during his or her childhood. Foodborne germs cause stomach pain and severe diarrhea. Sometimes the diarrhea will be accompanied by vomiting, a fever, or the bowel movement may contain blood. A child can lose weight and become dehydrated very quickly. Should you suspect your child is becoming dehydrated or suffering from an unusual diarrheal illness, if you believe the diarrhea might have blood in it, or you observe a dramatic change in behavior, contact your pediatrician immediately. Do not allow your child to be treated with antibiotics until the source of the illness is identified; the wrong antibiotic can make your child worse. Do not treat your child with a medicine that stops or slows down the diarrhea.

For more information about protecting your family from foodborne illness, contact: www.stop-usa.org or **800-350-STOP**

So Your *Baby* Is Starting Solids...



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Foodborne Illness*