

Environmental Hazards During Pregnancy

Environmental hazards that have potential to harm your unborn baby are usually easy to avoid once you are able to identify them. The following list of potential environmental hazards should be used as a reference. It is important to talk with your midwife about any environmental hazards that you might be exposed to during the day.

➤ **Activities that raise the body's core temperature**

- Places that have high ambient temperature like engine spaces, closed laundry facilities
- Excessive or prolonged high impact exercise
- Using a sauna
- Using a jacuzzi

Minimize your risk:

- Identify activities that might raise the body's core temperature
- Limit exposure to activities that raise the body's core temperature
- Drink water to prevent dehydration

➤ **Disease**

- Avoid exposure to certain diseases - German measles (Rubella), Chicken Pox or shingles and any STD's
- Avoid exposure to viruses or bacteria in a hospital or laboratory setting

Minimize your risk:

- Identify potential biological hazard exposure in your workplace or during the day with your midwife
- Form a safety game plan with your midwife concerning your exposure to these
- Protect yourself by wearing gloves and (if you need to) use a respirator when exposed
- Avoid receiving live virus vaccinations during pregnancy

➤ **Household chemicals** (Exposure of chemicals by ingestion, contamination of the skin, or inhalation)

- Cleaning products (especially chlorine- and ammonia-based cleaning products)
- Lawn-care chemicals
- Paint (especially lead or oil based paint)
- Insecticides
- Pesticides
- Certain chemicals found in hair/nail salons

Minimize your risk:

- Ventilate the area when using **any** chemical or potentially harmful substance, even if it isn't "toxic"
- Protect yourself by wearing gloves and (if you need to) use a respirator when exposed to these substances
- Never mix cleaning products, especially ammonia and chlorine, together as they can produce harmful fumes
- Substitute non-toxic cleaning products for products that are toxic
- Let your hair stylist know you are pregnant and limit inhalation of salon chemicals as much as possible

➤ **Loud background noise or prolonged low frequency whole body vibration**

- Frequent or prolonged noise above 84 decibels (jet engine, heavy machine equipment, rock concert)
- Operating a jackhammer
- Driving at high speed over a highway with many potholes.

Minimize your risk:

- Identify and minimize exposure to loud ambient noise or prolonged whole body vibration
- Form a safety game plan with your midwife concerning exposure to these environmental hazards

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➤ **Listeriosis**

Listeriosis is a bacterial disease that can negatively impact your unborn baby. Pregnant women that ingest contaminated foods can become infected. During pregnancy avoid eating:

- Unpasteurized dairy products- **Raw** milk (goat, cow, etc.) and foods (yogurt, cheese, etc.)
- Under cooked or raw meat, poultry, and fish
- Soft cheeses- Brie, blue cheese, goat cheese
- Deli meats and hot dogs
- Raw or partially cooked eggs can be contaminated with salmonella
- Unwashed, contaminated vegetables

Minimize your risk:

- Heat deli meat and hot dogs to a temperature of 165F
- Wash, rinse and sanitize work surfaces that have been exposed
- Thoroughly cook all meat, poultry, and fish before eating them
- Wash your vegetables before eating them
- Consume pasteurized dairy products
- When in doubt just throw the food out!

➤ **Organic/Chemical solvents** (Exposure of solvents by ingestion, contamination of the skin, or inhalation)

- Turpentine/mineral spirits (paint thinners)
- Fuel
- Oils/Lubricants

Minimize your risk:

- Identify potentially harmful substances
- Form a safety game plan with your midwife concerning your exposure to these substances
- If you can't completely avoid exposure, minimize the amount of time you are exposed
- Ventilate the area when using **any** chemical or potentially harmful substance, even if it isn't "toxic"
- Protect yourself by wearing gloves and (if you need to) use a respirator when exposed to these substances

➤ **Radiation**

According to the American College of Radiology, no single diagnostic X-ray results in radiation exposure to a degree that threatens a developing embryo or fetus; **so if a single test is needed for health, it's okay.** But multiple X-rays or any X-rays that are **less than essential** should be postponed until after delivery.

Minimize your risk:

- Remind anyone who provides medical care that you are pregnant!
- Discuss potential benefit verses potential harm of any procedure with your care provider

➤ **Toxoplasmosis**

Toxoplasmosis is a parasite that can negatively affect your unborn baby. This parasite can be found in:

- Cat feces from an infected cat
- Raw/undercooked meat

Minimize your risk:

- Avoid changing the litter box during pregnancy
- Make sure you use gloves when you garden (incase the soil contains cat feces)
- Wash your hands after possible exposure

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→ **Toxic Heavy Metals** (Exposure of solvents by ingestion, contamination of the skin, or inhalation)

Lead

- Contaminated soil
- Lead-based paint
- Occupational exposure from handling materials containing lead
- Drinking water that is contaminated from lead based pipes

Cadmium

- Cigarette smoke
- Foods- Shellfish, liver and kidney meats
- Certain types of paint
- Certain types of batteries
- Certain types of metal plating
- Certain types of microscopes

Mercury

Elemental mercury

- Certain types of thermometers
- Fluorescent light bulbs
- Certain types of batteries
- Dental fillings
- Workplace exposure from handling materials containing mercury

Methylmercury

- Industrial pollution such as burning coal
- Found in certain types of seafood and fish contain high levels

Minimize your risk:

- Identify potentially harmful
- Form a safety game plan with your midwife concerning your exposure to heavy metals
- If you can't completely avoid exposure, minimize the amount of time you are exposed
- Protect yourself by wearing gloves and (if you need to) use a respirator when exposed to heavy metals
- Limit consumption of seafood to once a week
- Avoid consuming predatory fish, like swordfish or shark, that contain high levels of mercury
- Second hand (passive smoke), car exhaust, carbon monoxide, and high levels of air pollution

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