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## Preventing Infections During Pregnancy



Becoming pregnant and starting a family is an exciting time in your life. Perinatal infections can make the pregnancy a very stressful time and create an unhappy outcome. There are several diseases that can cause serious complication for the baby. Zika virus has made the news for the past several weeks for its devastating effects on the baby. It is passed onto the baby by the mother if she is bitten, during pregnancy, by a mosquito of the Aedes family, which is found in tropical climates. The mosquito has been found as far North as Mexico, but not in the United States to date. To make matters worse we now know it has been transmitted via sexual intercourse in at least one case in the USA. The concern is it may be transmitted via blood products and possibly other bodily fluids such as saliva. Anyone who has been exposed to the Zika virus can get sick. Only about 1 in 5 people stricken with Zika will have symptoms, and once you have had the disease you will have immunity to the virus. The concern is for the pregnant women who have not had the disease prior to becoming pregnant. It is unlikely that a pregnant woman in the United States will contract the virus if she does not travel into infested areas of the world.

There are many other diseases, including food borne diseases and infectious diseases, which may complicate a pregnancy and ultimately harm the baby. Some practical ideas to help prevent getting infections while pregnant are:



1. Wash your hands frequently. It is best to use soap and water, hand sanitizers are not as effective at eliminating germs. Wash after using the bathroom, changing diapers, caring for sick children (or any sick person), preparing food especially raw foods, gardening or touching dirt/soil, grooming or petting animals. If you are not sure wash your hands again.
2. Do not eat uncooked or under cooked meats, this includes unpasteurized (raw) milk and foods made from it. They may contain Listeria, which may cause sepsis or even meningitis.
3. Don't share food, drinks or eating utensils with anyone. Many viruses and some bacteria's are transmitted by saliva (spit). Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is just one example of a virus, which is transmitted through bodily fluids, which is harmful to the unborn baby.
4. Do not change the cat litter box if you are pregnant. Cats carry a parasite called toxoplasmosis which is transmitted to humans from their droppings (stools). Toxoplasmosis can cause brain & nervous system problems in the newborn.
5. Other infectious disease to be aware of are rubella, herpes simplex, measles, and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, syphilis and gonorrhea. Your gynecologist is very aware of



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these diseases and what they can do to the unborn infant, talk to your doctor become informed and make good choices.

For more information on these diseases and conditions please go to the following websites.

[Avoiding Infections in Pregnancy](#)

<http://www.uptodate.com/contents/avoiding-infections-in-pregnancy-beyond-the-basics?view=print>

[Pregnancy Complications](#)

<http://womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/you-are-pregnant/pregnancy-complications.html>

[Prevent Infections in Pregnancy](#)

<http://www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/infections.html>

[Protect Your Unborn Baby or Newborn from Infections](#)

<http://www.cdc.gov/features/prenatalinfections/index.html>