Top Tips For A Holly Jolly Pregnancy This Season

I can't begin to describe how organized I was during the holiday season when I was pregnant with my first child. Since I was pretty far along (5 months), I wanted to make sure each gift was chosen way ahead of time, I knew how long it would take me to get the food trimmings just right and whether I should emphasize red or green in my decorating scheme. All of this had to be done before that "pregnancy brain" I had heard so much about set-in. Little did I know, the most important items on my holiday to-do list weren't sitting on store shelves or mixed in with the tinsel and mistletoe.

Years later, as a teratogen information specialist for MotherToBaby, I realized some of the best gifts for a healthy pregnancy didn't come with ribbons and bows, but from awareness and education! For example, did you know the holiday buffet table could include foods that could potentially cause harm to a developing baby? Or, if not careful, decorating could put a pregnant woman in a dangerous situation? Today I encourage pregnant women to master must-know safety tips long before putting together must-have gift lists this season. Here are a few of my tips:

Tip 1. Importance of Getting Vaccinated

It is recommended that pregnant women have a flu vaccine in every pregnancy and be current on Tdap vaccine and Covid 19 vaccines. Women who are 32-36 weeks pregnant are currently eligible for the RSV vaccine https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/rsv-vaccine/. This vaccine can pass protection to the developing baby, helping lower the chance of severe RSV infection once the baby is born.

Not only should a pregnant woman be up-to-date on vaccines, but **anyone** older than 6 months of age who will be around a newborn should be vaccinated.

Tip 2. Choose Wisely at the Buffet Table

Drinks like eggnog and spiced cider may contain alcohol https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/alcohol-pregnancy. If you're not sure what's s in a beverage, ask the host. Also, avoid soft cheeses made from unpasteurized milk, as they may contain bacteria that can cause a serious illness for a developing baby called Listeria https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/listeriosis-pregnancy, as well as increased risk of miscarriage, uterine infection, or premature labor. Meats like cocktail franks and pâté can also contain bacteria. Meats need to be thoroughly cooked so that bacteria are killed.

Tip 3. CMV (cytomegalovirus) May Be Lurking

CMV is a common virus that often has no symptoms. If a pregnant woman gets CMV https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/cytomegalovirus-cmv-pregnancy, the baby could be at increased risk for hearing loss, developmental delays, or birth defects. To prevent infection, pregnant women should wash hands after changing diapers, feeding children, wiping children's noses, or handling children's toys. Also, avoid sharing food, eating utensils, toothbrushes, and pacifiers with children.

Tip 4. Holiday Decoration Safety

Some artificial trees, strings of lights, and ornaments may contain lead. Use gloves or wash hands after handling decorations to reduce exposure. Because of changes in their center of gravity, pregnant women should stay off ladders and let others decorate the hard-to-reach places.

Tip 5. Manage Anxiety and Depression

Having a 'happy holiday' can mean lots of stress, especially when pregnant. Anxiety https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/anxiety-fact to have that ***perfect*** holiday is real. Depression https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/depression-pregnancy can be triggered this time of year as well. Don't hesitate to ask for help if you are feeling overwhelmed with all the gift giving and holiday activities. Stay in-touch with your healthcare providers because…. help is available!

I hope these tips are helpful. While my son did end up turning out to be just fine, I think I would have caused myself less stress and worry had I known these tips during my pregnancy. If you have questions, don't hesitate to reach out to MotherToBaby by phone, text, chat or email.

On behalf of all of us at MotherToBaby, here's to wishing you a happy and healthy holiday!

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org.

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