



FOODFACTS

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The Dangers of Raw Milk:

Unpasteurized Milk Can Pose a Serious Health Risk

Milk and milk products provide a wealth of nutrition benefits. But raw milk can harbor dangerous microorganisms that can pose serious health risks to you and your family. According to an analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), between 1993 and 2006 more than 1500 people in the United States became sick from drinking raw milk or eating cheese made from raw milk. In addition, CDC reported that unpasteurized milk is 150 times more likely to cause foodborne illness and results in 13 times more hospitalizations than illnesses involving pasteurized dairy products.

Raw milk is milk from cows, sheep, or goats that has not been pasteurized to kill harmful bacteria. This raw, unpasteurized milk can carry dangerous bacteria such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Listeria*, which are responsible for causing numerous foodborne illnesses.

These harmful bacteria can seriously affect the health of anyone who drinks raw milk or eats foods made from raw milk. However, the bacteria in raw milk can be especially dangerous to **people with weakened immune systems, older adults, pregnant women, and children**. In fact, the CDC analysis found that foodborne illness from raw milk especially affected children and teenagers.

“Pasteurized Milk” Explained

Pasteurization is a process that kills harmful bacteria by heating milk to a specific temperature for a set period of time. First developed by Louis Pasteur in 1864, pasteurization kills harmful organisms responsible for such diseases as listeriosis, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, diphtheria, and brucellosis.

Research shows no meaningful difference in the nutritional values of pasteurized and unpasteurized milk. Pasteurized milk contains low levels of the type of nonpathogenic bacteria that can cause food spoilage, so storing your pasteurized milk in the refrigerator is still important.

Raw Milk and Serious Illness

Symptoms and Advice

Symptoms of foodborne illness include:

- Vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain
- Flulike symptoms such as fever, headache, and body ache

While most healthy people will recover from an illness caused by harmful bacteria in raw milk — or in foods made with raw milk — within a short period of time, some can develop symptoms that are chronic, severe, or even life-threatening.

If you or someone you know becomes ill after consuming raw milk or products made from raw milk — or, if you are pregnant and think you could have consumed contaminated raw milk or cheese — see a doctor or healthcare provider immediately.

The Dangers of Listeria and Pregnancy

Pregnant women run a serious risk of becoming ill from the bacteria *Listeria*, which can cause miscarriage, fetal death, or illness or death of a newborn.

If you are pregnant, consuming raw milk — or foods made from raw milk, such as Mexican-style cheese like Queso Blanco or Queso Fresco — can harm your baby even if you don't feel sick.



Raw Milk & Pasteurization: Debunking Milk Myths

While pasteurization has helped provide safe, nutrient-rich milk and cheese for over 120 years, some people continue to believe that pasteurization harms milk and that raw milk is a safe, healthier alternative.

Here are some common myths and proven facts about milk and pasteurization:

- Pasteurizing milk **DOES NOT** cause lactose intolerance and allergic reactions. Both raw milk and pasteurized milk can cause allergic reactions in people sensitive to milk proteins.
- Raw milk **DOES NOT** kill dangerous pathogens by itself.
- Pasteurization **DOES NOT** reduce milk's nutritional value.
- Pasteurization **DOES NOT** mean that it is safe to leave milk out of the refrigerator for extended time, particularly after it has been opened.
- Pasteurization **DOES** kill harmful bacteria.
- Pasteurization **DOES** save lives.



Safety ■ Health ■ Science ■ Nutrition

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Protect Your Family with Wise Food Choices

Most milk and milk products sold commercially in the United States contain pasteurized milk or cream, or the products have been produced in a manner that kills any dangerous bacteria that may be present. But unpasteurized milk and products made from unpasteurized milk *are* sold and may be harmful to your health. To avoid getting sick from the dangerous bacteria found in raw milk, you should choose your milk and milk products carefully. Consider these guidelines:

Okay to Eat

- **Pasteurized** milk or cream
- Hard cheeses such as cheddar, and extra hard grating cheeses such as Parmesan
- Soft cheeses, such as Brie, Camembert, blue-veined cheeses, and Mexican-style soft cheeses such as Queso Fresco, Panela, Asadero, and Queso Blanco made from **pasteurized** milk
- Processed cheeses
- Cream, cottage, and Ricotta cheese made from **pasteurized** milk
- Yogurt made from **pasteurized** milk
- Pudding made from **pasteurized** milk
- Ice cream or frozen yogurt made from **pasteurized** milk



Unsafe to Eat

- Unpasteurized milk or cream
- Soft cheeses, such as Brie and Camembert, and Mexican-style soft cheeses such as Queso Fresco, Panela, Asadero, and Queso Blanco made from unpasteurized milk
- Yogurt made from unpasteurized milk
- Pudding made from unpasteurized milk
- Ice cream or frozen yogurt made from unpasteurized milk

When in Doubt — Ask!

Taking a few moments to make sure milk is pasteurized — or that a product isn't *made* from raw milk — can protect you or your loved ones from serious illness.

- **Read the label.** Safe milk will have the word “pasteurized” on the label. If the word “pasteurized” does not appear on a product’s label, it may contain raw milk.
- Don’t hesitate to **ask your grocer or store clerk** whether milk or cream has been pasteurized, especially milk or milk products sold in refrigerated cases at grocery or health food stores.
- Don’t buy milk or milk products at farm stands or farmers’ markets **unless you can confirm** that it has been pasteurized.

Is Your Homemade Ice Cream Safe?

Each year, homemade ice cream causes serious outbreaks of infection from *Salmonella*. The ingredient responsible? Raw or undercooked eggs. If you choose to make ice cream at home, use a pasteurized egg product, egg substitute, or pasteurized shell eggs in place of the raw eggs in your favorite recipe. There are also numerous egg-free ice cream recipes available.

Everyone can practice safe food handling by following these four simple steps:

