



# Dairy Facts: Raw Milk

## Consuming Raw, Unpasteurized Milk is a Serious Health Risk

### What is “raw milk”?

- Milk from cows, goats, sheep or other animals that has not been pasteurized.
- Pasteurization is the process of heating milk to at least 161 degrees for at least 15 seconds and then cooling it rapidly to kill any disease-causing bacteria.

### Raw milk can be harmful

- 85 outbreaks of human infections resulting from consumption of raw milk were reported from 1998-2008 to the U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These outbreaks included 1,614 illnesses, 187 hospitalizations and 2 deaths.<sup>1</sup>
- The actual number of illnesses associated with raw milk likely is greater because not all cases of food borne illness are recognized and reported.<sup>2</sup>

### Why pasteurize? It is necessary for dairy food safety

- Pasteurization is the only way to ensure milk products do not contain harmful bacteria.<sup>3</sup>
- The dairy industry abides by regulations issued and enforced by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for pasteurizing milk.
- Drinking pasteurized milk has never been found to cause any disease, allergy or developmental or behavioral problem.<sup>4</sup>
- Pasteurization does not affect the taste or nutritional value of milk and dairy products. All of the nutritional benefits of drinking milk are available from pasteurized milk without the risk of disease that comes with drinking raw milk.<sup>5</sup>
- Milk is extensively tested before and after pasteurization to confirm it is ready for retail distribution – well before the product reaches the consumer. This also ensures that any problem with the pasteurization equipment will be discovered promptly at the source, before the milk reaches consumers.

### No scientific evidence finds that drinking raw milk prevents or cures any disease or illness.

- Claims that raw milk can “cure” conditions advocates have listed such as lactose intolerance, Crohn’s disease, autism, tooth decay and cancer are mostly based on testimonials or anecdotal stories, not scientific evidence.<sup>6</sup>
- There are no health benefits from drinking raw milk that cannot be obtained from drinking pasteurized milk that is free of disease-causing bacteria.<sup>7</sup>

### Selling raw milk for consumer use across state lines has been against U.S. law since 1987. Intrastate sale of raw milk is illegal in approximately 20 states.

- “It is undisputed that all types of raw milk are unsafe for human consumption and pose a significant health risk. The appropriate remedy in this case is therefore, an order compelling the agency to promote a regulation prohibiting interstate sale.” – Federal Judge Norma Holloway, who ordered the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to ban interstate shipment of raw milk and raw milk products (Public Citizen v. Heckler, 653 F. Supp. 1229, 1241 (1987)).
- The only exception is cheese made from raw milk, provided the cheese has been aged a minimum of 60 days and is clearly labeled as unpasteurized. (The American Dietetic

Association recommends that pregnant women avoid soft cheeses not made with pasteurized milk as well as other raw milk or raw milk products).

**Numerous scientific, government and health organizations believe consuming raw milk is unsafe and advocate pasteurization, including:**

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Animal Health Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association, American Medical Association, American Public Health Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, National Environmental Health Association, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, Association of Food and Drug Officials, Health Canada, European Food Safety Authority, Food and Agriculture Association of the United Nations, International Association for Food Protection, and World Health Organization.

*The Texas Association of Dairymen ([www.milk4texas.org](http://www.milk4texas.org)) is a non-profit corporation comprised of dairy cooperatives whose members are individual milk producers in Texas.*

**Sources:**

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- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration, <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/Product-SpecificInformation/MilkSafety/ucm122062.htm>
  - <sup>2</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/raw\\_milk/](http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/raw_milk/)
  - <sup>3</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/raw\\_milk/](http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/raw_milk/)
  - <sup>4</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/raw\\_milk/](http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/raw_milk/)
  - <sup>5</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/raw\\_milk/](http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/raw_milk/)
  - <sup>6</sup> Real Raw Milk Facts, <http://www.realrawmilkfacts.com/>
  - <sup>7</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/raw\\_milk/](http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/raw_milk/)