

RAW (UNPASTEURIZED) MILK CONSUMPTION

Is it legal to sell raw milk for human consumption?

Federal regulation prohibits the introduction into interstate commerce of any unpasteurized milk product in final package form and intended for human consumption (21 CFR 1240.61). Although some states permit the intrastate (within state boundaries) sale of raw milk, Delaware does not allow the sale or offer of unpasteurized milk or milk products to consumers.

How does the pasteurization of raw milk protect consumers?

Pasteurization is a process that kills harmful bacteria by heating milk to a specific temperature for a set period of time. Although some spoilage organisms may still be present, the pasteurization process kills the types of bacteria that may cause disease.

Is it safe to consume raw milk?

- It is not safe to consume raw milk, no matter how carefully it is produced. Raw milk may contain many pathogens, including *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Salmonella* species, *E. coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and *bovis*, *Brucella* species, *Coxiella Burnetii*, and *Yersinia enterocolitica*. Illnesses caused by these bacteria can cause special problems for the very young, the elderly, and the immunocompromised. Infection with *E. coli* O157:H7 can cause hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), which can possibly result in acute renal failure.
- Raw milk does not kill disease-causing bacteria. Instead, raw milk potentially harbors a wide range of dangerous pathogens that can cause illness.
- Raw milk does not cure illness or allergies.

Have any illnesses or deaths been caused by consuming raw milk products?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 148 U.S. outbreaks due to consuming raw milk occurred between 1998 and 2011, resulting in 2,384 illnesses, 284 hospitalizations, and two deaths. Most illnesses are not part of recognized outbreaks.

What are the symptoms of illnesses caused by consuming raw milk?

Consuming raw milk may cause vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, headache, and body aches. Most people will recover from illness caused by bacteria in raw milk; however, some individuals can develop chronic, severe, or life-threatening symptoms.

What are the effects of pasteurization on raw milk?

Pasteurization does not significantly change the nutrient content of raw milk. The milk proteins that cause allergic reactions in dairy-sensitive individuals are the same in pasteurized milk. Pasteurization does not affect the lactose concentration in milk, nor does it lead to lactose intolerance, which is due to some individuals' bodies not producing the enzyme needed to break down lactose.

- **Nutrients:** There is no significant difference between the nutrient content of pasteurized and unpasteurized milk.
- **Allergies:** There is no difference in the milk proteins present in both raw and pasteurized milk that cause allergic reactions in dairy-sensitive individuals.
- **Lactose intolerance:** Pasteurization does not lead to lactose intolerance, which is due to some individuals' bodies not producing the enzyme needed to break down lactose. Pasteurization does not affect the lactose concentration in milk.

Resources

The Food and Drug Administration, Raw Milk Questions & Answers,
<https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/raw-milk-questions-answers>