

FAQs

RAW MILK

There is an increasing movement in the U.S. to consume locally grown, unprocessed foods. This trend leads some to believe that raw milk is a healthier alternative to pasteurized milk. Certainly, milk and milk products provide a wealth of nutrition benefits. However, raw milk can carry dangerous bacteria, posing serious health risks to you and your family.

Please, be an informed consumer.

Q1 What is raw milk?

Raw milk is milk from cows, sheep or goats – or any animal – that has not been pasteurized to kill harmful bacteria. ¹

Q2 Is raw milk safe?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Veterinary Medical Association recommend drinking only pasteurized milk. Raw milk can contain harmful disease-causing pathogens such as Salmonella, E. coli, Listeria, Campylobacter, and others. Illnesses caused by these bacteria can be especially problematic for infants, young children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems. But healthy people of any age can also get sick. ¹¹³

Q3 What is pasteurization?

Pasteurization is the process of heating milk to a specific temperature for a specific length of time to kill dangerous bacteria that could be in the milk. Pasteurization kills harmful organisms that can cause diseases such as listeriosis, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, diphtheria, Q fever and brucellosis. For more than a century, pasteurization has been recognized around the world as an essential tool for protecting public health. ¹¹³



Q4 Does pasteurization change milk's nutrient benefits?

No. Research shows no meaningful difference between the nutrient content of pasteurized milk and raw milk. ^{1 3}

Q5 Are there any benefits to drinking raw milk that outweigh the risk?

No. There are no demonstrated benefits to consuming raw milk in place of pasteurized milk. Raw milk does not cure lactose intolerance. Raw milk does not cure or treat asthma or allergies. There are no beneficial bacteria in raw milk for gastrointestinal health. Raw milk is not an immune system building food and is particularly unsafe for children. There are no immunoglobulins in raw milk that enhance the human immune system. ²

Q6 There are people who claim they've been drinking raw milk for a long time and have never got sick from it. Why is that?

The presence of harmful bacteria in raw milk is unpredictable. The amount of harmful bacteria in raw milk may be too low to make a person sick, and later high enough to make the same person seriously ill. For some people, drinking contaminated raw milk just once could make them sick. Even if you trust the farmer or the store, raw milk is never a guaranteed safe product. ³

Q7 Is raw milk safe if it comes from a clean dairy farm and is tested for pathogens?

No matter how clean a dairy farm is, no farm is germ-free. And even with the precautions dairy farmers take in producing milk, they cannot guarantee that their raw milk is free of harmful bacteria even if tests indicate otherwise.

Testing raw milk for the various pathogens prior to consumption cannot be used as an alternative to pasteurization. The potential pathogens present in raw milk can be diverse, variable and unpredictable. It is simply impossible to test every single pathogen prior to human consumption. ²



1 - US Food and Drug Administration

www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/dangers-raw-milk-unpasteurized-milk-can-pose-serious-health-risk

2 - US Food and Drug Administration

www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/raw-milk-misconceptions-and-danger-raw-milk-consumption

3 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/rawmilk/raw-milk-questions-and-answers.html