



Pasteurized and Raw Milk

How is pasteurized milk different from raw milk?

Pasteurized milk has been heated to kill all disease-causing bacteria that may be found in raw milk. Raw milk is unpasteurized milk, consumed directly from the cow, goat or sheep without any process to destroy disease causing bacteria.

By law, all milk sold to the public, including from farms, must be pasteurized. Only vitamins A and D are added to the milk - no other additives or preservatives can be legally added to milk. Vitamin A improves eyesight, helping you to see better at night or in dim light and to tell colours apart. Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium and reduces the risk of osteoporosis.

What are the risks of drinking raw milk?

Raw milk is not pasteurized to destroy germs or bacteria which can cause disease or illness. As well, raw milk may also come from farms that are not approved, inspected or monitored by government.

Some people say they grew up drinking raw milk and never became sick from it. However, public health authorities know of many cases of people who became sick from drinking raw milk.

Mandatory pasteurization of milk has eliminated large outbreaks of milk borne disease in Canada. However outbreaks still occur and remind us of the hazards of drinking raw milk.

What can you do to protect yourself and your family?

- Anyone can get sick from the disease-causing bacteria or germs, which may be found in raw milk.
- Infants, children, seniors, and people with certain chronic diseases are more vulnerable to infection and have higher risk of getting sick from drinking raw milk. Infants and children are at greatest risk because they usually drink a lot of milk.
- Only buy your milk products from grocery or other commercial stores. Milk that you buy **must** be pasteurized and packaged at an approved dairy plant.

If you live in a rural area and cannot buy commercially pasteurized milk, you can follow this process for home pasteurization:

- First, disinfect the clean, empty milk bottles and tops by boiling in water for 10 minutes or by putting them in a preheated oven for 20 minutes at 100° C (212° F).
- Place the raw milk in the top part of a double boiler. Gradually raise the temperature of the milk to 63° C (145° F) or hotter, and keep it at this temperature for at least 30 minutes. Stir often to prevent burning and to keep all the milk at the same temperature.
- Check the temperature of the milk often with a clean, reliable thermometer. Put the thermometer about 2/3 or two-thirds of the way into the milk; do not rest it on the side or the bottom of the container. If you find the temperature has fallen below 63° C (145° F), raise the temperature to 63° C (145° F) or hotter and start the 30 minute timing over again.
- Cool the pasteurized milk quickly by putting the top part of the double boiler in ice water. Stir often to make it cool faster.
- Pour the cooled milk into the disinfected bottles and put them in the refrigerator at 4° C (40° F).
- Pasteurized milk in the refrigerator should keep for up to two weeks.

NOTE: Do not use a microwave oven to try to pasteurize milk at home. Use the method described above.

For more information on raw milk, please contact your local environmental health officer.



BC Centre for Disease Control
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