

pasteurisation

health risks

from unpasteurised milk

...pasteurise your milk for a healthy drink



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HEALTH RISKS FROM UNPASTEURISED MILK

Is unpasteurised milk safe to drink?

No.

By consuming unpasteurised milk you are placing yourself at an unnecessary risk of serious illness. Unpasteurised milk can contain disease causing bacteria (pathogens).

Two major pathogens that may be found in milk include *E. coli* O157:H7 and *Campylobacter*.

***E. coli* O157:H7** - This can cause bloody diarrhoea and may result in kidney failure or even death. The most frightening aspect is that even tiny numbers of these bacteria can cause serious illness. Whilst there is limited information for Irish livestock, studies have shown up to 20% of cattle and sheep to be excreting this pathogen. Studies in the UK have shown that 15-44% of cattle herds were positive for this pathogen.

Campylobacter - This can cause acute gastroenteritis with diarrhoea and/or vomiting. In most cases, the illness is self limiting, but it may be severe and life-threatening in susceptible people including young children, pregnant women, the elderly and the sick.

Other diseases - that one could contract from the consumption of raw milk include Tuberculosis, Salmonellosis and Brucellosis. In England and Wales, where some unpasteurised milk is still sold, 16 outbreaks of infectious diseases associated with unpasteurised milk were reported from 1992 to 2001.

it is illegal to sell unpasteurised cow's milk in Ireland



How does milk become contaminated?

With healthy animals, the milk inside the udder has very few germs. However, if animals have diseases such as mastitis or TB, pathogens can be present in the milk even inside the udder. Also, even healthy animals may carry and therefore, excrete pathogens. During milking there is the possibility of contamination of the milk from the animal herself (surfaces of teats, hairs, urine and faeces etc.) and from unclean milking equipment or the milking environment.

Who is at risk from unpasteurised milk?

Many dairy farm families and their visitors still drink raw milk. This risk can be eliminated either by purchasing pasteurised milk or by using a small home pasteuriser. Home pasteurisers can be bought for approximately €450 (April 2007) and thousands of these have been sold in the past few years.

Pasteurisation makes milk safer

Pasteurisation kills or inactivates milk pathogens including *E. coli* O157, *Campylobacter* etc. It involves heating the milk to a high temperature for a short time (72°C for 15 seconds). Rapid cooling after pasteurisation is important. Pasteurisation has little effect on the flavour or nutritional value of the milk.