

# Unpasteurized Milk Products Hazardous To Your Health

## For Immediate Release

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Two cases of E. coli O157:H7 in West Michigan have been traced back to consumption of raw milk products from an Ottawa County cow share program. In March, a 31 year old Muskegon County woman became ill after drinking raw milk, and in April, a 6 year old child from Kent County became ill after possible consumption of the raw milk product.

Organisms that make people sick are found in the intestines of animals. Contamination of milk occurs when fecal matter is present on the udder of an animal or in the equipment used to process the milk. Enough bacteria to cause illness can be present and not be visibly dirty upon inspection. Pasteurizing is the process of heating the milk to high temperatures to kill the harmful bacteria that make you sick. Raw or unpasteurized milk (sometimes called fresh milk or fresh unprocessed milk) is milk that comes directly from a cow, goat, sheep or other animal's udder and is not heat treated (pasteurized) to kill bacteria. Raw milk carries a much higher risk of causing serious illness than pasteurized milk, and you cannot see or smell the germs in raw milk that make you sick.

Some believe drinking raw milk products is more nutritious and provides the body with "good bacteria". The pasteurizing process does not significantly change the nutritional value of milk, and due to the risk of serious illness, there are far safer sources of good bacteria than raw milk. Pasteurized probiotic yogurts, kefir, and other products are a great source of probiotics.

The CDC reports that unpasteurized milk is 150 times more likely to cause foodborne illness, and results in 13 times more hospitalizations than illnesses involving pasteurized dairy products. Due to poorly developed immune systems, infants and children are at greater risk for becoming sick and are more likely to suffer from long term damage from diseases linked to drinking raw milk.

Due to the health risk of consuming raw milk, it is not legal to sell raw milk or raw milk products in the State of Michigan. Because of this, raw milk is obtained through herd share programs. In a herd share program, consumers purchase a share of a cow and, as the owner of the cow, are provided raw milk from the farmer. These herd share dairy programs are not licensed or inspected by state or local agencies.

If you or someone you know has become ill in the days following consumption of a raw milk product, seek medical attention. Symptoms of illness include vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain along with fever, headache, and body ache. Pregnant women, infants, small children, the elderly, and people with chronic illnesses should never consume raw milk products.

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For more information on the pasteurization process:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/consumers/ucm079516.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/features/rawmilk/>

[http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2014/05/raw-milk-is-ongoing-hazard-cdc-warns-public-health-workers/#.U3N\\_bXabXm4](http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2014/05/raw-milk-is-ongoing-hazard-cdc-warns-public-health-workers/#.U3N_bXabXm4)