



# County of San Diego

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

[www.sdcdeh.org](http://www.sdcdeh.org)

<http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/hhsa/index.html>



## Raw Milk May Pose Health Risk

Most of the milk sold in the United States is pasteurized, a process during which the milk is heated to at least 161°F for 15 seconds. Pasteurization kills harmful bacteria that can contaminate milk before it gets to your table. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend pasteurization for all milk consumed by people in the United States.

In California, raw (unpasteurized) milk and raw dairy products must come from a licensed raw dairy. These products are required to have the following warning on their labels:

***"WARNING: Raw (unpasteurized) milk and raw milk dairy products may contain disease-causing microorganisms. Persons at highest risk of disease from these organisms include newborns, infants, the elderly and pregnant women; those taking corticosteroids, antibiotics or antacids; and those having chronic illnesses or other conditions that weaken their immunity."***

It is important to know the following food safety facts if you are considering raw milk for you and your family:

- The rate of outbreaks of infection due to consumption of raw milk or raw milk dairy products is approximately 150 times greater than that seen in pasteurized products. ([Adam J. Langer, 2012](#)).
- Illnesses associated with unpasteurized dairy products are more likely to result in hospitalization and more severe illness than those associated with pasteurized products. ([CDC, Majority of dairy-related disease outbreaks linked to raw milk, 2012](#)).
- Raw milk and raw milk products are inherently unsafe for consumers because they may contain one or more types of bacteria (*Brucella*, *Campylobacter*, Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* such as *E. coli* 0157:H7, *Listeria*, *Mycobacterium bovis*, *Salmonella* species and *Yersinia*) that can cause mild to severe illness. ([California Department of Public Health, 2010](#)).
- Outbreaks of infection due to consumption of raw milk or raw milk dairy products have been documented nationwide and can involve hundreds of people. ([Adam J. Langer, 2012](#)). According to the CDC, between 1998 and 2008, there were 85 outbreaks associated with consumption of raw milk or raw milk products nationwide.
- When present, the bacteria could be especially dangerous to children, pregnant women and their unborn babies, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems. ([CDC, Raw \(unpasteurized\) Milk, 2012](#)).

Most healthy people recover from a foodborne infection after a short illness. However, some people may develop complications that are chronic, severe, or even life-threatening. People with infection can spread the infection to household members and other close contacts. If you think you might have become ill from drinking raw milk—or eating yogurt, cheese, or any other product made from it—see your health care provider immediately.

The California Department of Public Health has issued recommendations regarding raw milk which can be found at:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/RawMilk.aspx>

For more information about raw milk and raw dairy products see:

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/UCM245236.pdf>

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

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/RawMilk/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/rawmilk/raw-milk-index.html>

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/18/3/11-1370-t1.htm>

[http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2012/p0221\\_raw\\_milk\\_outbreak.html](http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2012/p0221_raw_milk_outbreak.html)