

# The Facts About Raw Milk

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## Drinking Raw Milk: An Unacceptable Risk

Raw milk is unsafe to drink because it could contain bacteria that cause illness. Canada's *Food and Drug Regulations* require that all milk available for sale in Canada be pasteurized.

There have been individual cases and outbreaks of illness related to drinking unpasteurized milk, or eating products made from unpasteurized milk. These cases have helped to make the public aware of the dangers of consuming raw milk.

## Illness Outbreaks in Ontario

The Ontario government is committed to the health and safety of all Ontarians and their families, working to promote food safety and prevent foodborne illnesses. Unfortunately, there have been many recent cases and outbreaks in Ontario related to drinking unpasteurized milk and eating cheese made from unpasteurized milk.

- From 2005-2007, 92 cases of illness caused by unpasteurized milk or cheese made from unpasteurized milk were reported in Ontario. With 61 cases reported, Campylobacteriosis was the most common illness caused by unpasteurized milk or cheese made from unpasteurized milk
- In 2005/ 2006, there were six cases of *E. coli* O157:H7 reported, and traced to drinking unpasteurized milk.
- In June 2007, in Eastern Ontario, a Health Unit reported illnesses associated with eating cheese made from raw milk. Over 20 people became ill, of which nine were confirmed to

be cases of campylobacteriosis, an infection that can result in diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, nausea and vomiting

## Outbreaks in the United States

The U.S. federal Food and Drug Agency (FDA) and other public health officials advise consumers to avoid drinking beverages or eating foods made with unpasteurized milk, including raw milk soft cheeses from any source. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) monitor illness caused by raw milk, and provides this summary of outbreaks in the United States. From 1998 to May 2005, the CDC reports that there were 45 outbreaks related to unpasteurized milk or cheese made from unpasteurized milk. An estimated 1,007 illnesses, 104 hospitalizations and two deaths were associated with these outbreaks.

Here are descriptions of some of the outbreaks:

- In a 2002-2003 outbreak of *Salmonella* typhimurium, 62 people in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Tennessee became ill after consuming raw milk sold in Ohio.
- In Washington State, it has been reported that an outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 infection in late 2005 was linked to raw milk and caused serious illness in eighteen people, of which eight were laboratory confirmed to be *E. coli* O157:H7.