

RAW MILK

ADVICE TO CONSUMERS

Raw milk provides an ideal environment for a range of pathogenic organisms and has been associated with numerous outbreaks of disease and illness in humans.

Raw milk

Raw milk is milk that has not undergone a pasteurisation process to kill any bacteria that might be present. Raw milk and raw milk products may come from a number of milking animals including cow, goat, sheep, buffalo, horse and camel.

Milk is a highly perishable product and is an ideal medium for the growth and multiplication of harmful microorganisms that can cause disease. Unpasteurised milk presents an increased risk of contamination with bacteria and does not provide any dietary advantage compared with pasteurised milk.

The treatment of milk and milk products to destroy pathogens is required by the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Food Standards Code) with very few exceptions. It is an important public health and food safety measure supported by scientific studies around the world and in Australia.

Risks associated with drinking raw milk

People who consume raw milk are at an increased risk of infection due to several different bacteria capable

of causing severe illness and potentially death.

Raw milk is known to carry several disease-causing organisms including:

- *Campylobacter jejuni* (campylobacteriosis)
- *Salmonella*
- *Listeria monocytogenes* (listeriosis)
- *Escherichia coli*
- *Cryptosporidium*
- *Staphylococcus aureus*

Complications from bacteria that can contaminate these products can be extremely severe, such as Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS) caused by Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* which can result in renal failure and death in otherwise healthy people.

What effect does pasteurisation have on milk?

The nutrient value of milk is generally unaffected by pasteurisation. Aside from 10 percent loss in vitamin C, the rest of the vitamins in milk are not affected by pasteurisation. Also, the main milk enzymes lactoferrin, lacto-

peroxidase, and lysozyme are highly active after pasteurisation.

What are the laws in NSW for milk?

It is illegal to sell raw milk as a food in Australia. In NSW, all milk sold (except goats milk) must be pasteurised. Unpasteurised goats milk is only permitted subject to compliance with the dairy food safety scheme and an advisory statement that the milk is unpasteurised must be included on the product.

In addition, all raw milk activities in NSW, such as the production of cosmetic products including soaps and bath wash, are also required to be licensed with the NSW Food Authority. This ensures they are produced subject to compliance with the dairy food safety scheme which includes strict licensing requirements underpinned by regulatory controls. These licence conditions prevent inappropriate labelling and packaging of raw milk products which may lead consumers to believe it is a food and will also impose requirements to render the product unpalatable.

The pasteurisation of milk and manufacturing of other dairy



produce is administered under the NSW Food Regulation 2015 and the *Food Act 2003*.

Raw milk cheeses

Manufacture of raw milk cheeses for human consumption must be approved by the relevant state authority (for businesses in NSW, this would be the NSW Food Authority). There are a number of steps and scientific trials that cheese makers wishing to manufacture raw milk cheese must go through in order to demonstrate compliance with food safety standards. The maturation of the cheese must meet certain time, temperature and water content requirements, a process which has a similar effect to pasteurisation in reducing pathogens.

Due to the cost, time and high level of technical expertise required to manufacture raw milk cheese products, this activity is prohibitive to many cheese makers making it a niche and expensive market.

Raw milk products for cosmetic use

It is an offence to supply or sell any raw milk products, such as soaps or bath wash, unless it has been treated, packaged, labelled and presented in a manner that deters human consumption and could not reasonably be mistaken for food.

If retailers choose to stock raw milk products, they are required to ensure their supplier is licensed with the Food Authority, and that the products are not packaged or displayed in a similar way to that of pasteurised milk for human consumption, such as in refrigerators next to pasteurised products.

This can lead to consumer confusion and purchase of the product believing that it is a food that can be safely consumed.

Consumers are urged to not consume raw cows' milk products.

More information

- visit the NSW Food Authority's website at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406 or email food.contact@dpi.nsw.gov.au
- visit the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au

About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

Note: This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).