



Ministry of
Health and Long-Term Care

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News Release

Unpasteurized Milk Poses Great Health Risk

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As you may have read or heard, the selling of raw or unpasteurized milk has been in the news recently. Different viewpoints have been reported leaving many to wonder about the health dangers surrounding raw milk.

Make no mistake about it – drinking unpasteurized milk is not good for you.

It can lead to mild illnesses, long-lasting serious diseases, and even death. This is because disease-causing bacteria found in raw milk include E. coli O157, the same bacteria found in the water that caused the deadly outbreak in Walkerton.

People who drink unpasteurized milk can suffer from severe diarrhea, stomach cramps or abdominal pain, vomiting, fever, weakness and chills. Certain people – such as young children, the elderly, people who are ill, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems – are especially vulnerable to becoming seriously ill.

What makes drinking raw milk even more dangerous is that these bacteria (which also include salmonella and campylobacter) can infect other people who haven't even consumed this unsafe product. The infection can be passed on from person-to-person by hand-to-mouth contact.

There is a long list of reports of what happens when people drink unpasteurized milk, including :

- n four cases of E. coli O157 linked to raw milk sold from unmarked trucks in Ontario in April 2005
- n twenty-three cases of campylobacter from an organic dairy farm in Wisconsin in December 2001
- n five children with E. coli O157 at a co-operative farm in Nanaimo, B.C. in August 2001. Two of these children developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, which is a serious complication that can lead to kidney failure.

It's because of these serious and sometimes fatal consequences that it is illegal to sell, offer to sell, deliver or distribute raw milk. Anyone who is aware of this happening should report it to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's complaint line at 1-888-466-2372 (ext. 64391).

For further information :

Members of the media :

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Media Line

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