



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Got Milk?

Campylobacter jejuni Infection Associated with Unpasteurized Milk and Cheese Consumption — Kansas, 2007

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Susan Laird] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Susan Laird, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Milk is one of the healthiest drinks known to man. It's a great source of calcium and vitamin D, which help build strong bones and healthy teeth. But if consumed raw or unpasteurized, milk *can* make you sick.

Dr. Titilayo Aghoghovbia is a researcher with CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service. She's joining us today by phone to discuss the risk of raw, unpasteurized milk. Welcome to the show, Dr. Aghoghovbia.

[Dr. Aghoghovbia] Thank you.

[Susan Laird] Dr. Aghoghovbia, why is milk that's consumed straight from the source potentially unhealthy?

[Dr. Aghoghovbia] Well, the milk is potentially unhealthy because it's gotten from cows that live in a non-sterile environment; they live on the farm; they lie down in the dirt on the farm. Occasionally, their teats and their udders get contaminated by their feces. Even if the farm is extremely meticulous about being clean, there is no way – since it's not a sterile environment – there's no way of being absolutely sure that there's no contamination, even at the source. After the milk is collected, usually it's stored in bulk tanks from several different sources and at this time, milk that was previously clean could get contaminated. And let's also remember that it's transported from one point to another, also, in vehicles that may not be absolutely clean. So at any point during the milking of the cow, the storage, or the transportation of the milk, it could become contaminated.

[Susan Laird] What kinds of illnesses can result from drinking raw milk or consuming products made from raw milk?

[Dr. Aghoghovbia] Well, mostly, you would have vomiting, diarrhea, maybe some aches and pains and some headaches, but in certain cases, you can have very severe dehydration and other chronic illnesses, such as kidney failure and even death.

[Susan Laird] Well, are some people at greater risk than others?

[Dr. Aghoghovbia] In situations where the immune system isn't as strong as it should be. For instance, in people who have some kind of compromise of their immune system, in the elderly, and in the very young, and in pregnant women. They're more prone to complications than the general public.

[Susan Laird] How does pasteurization eliminate the risk?

[Dr. Aghoghovbia] During the process of pasteurization, the milk is heated to a very high temperature for a tiny amount of time, say 15 seconds. And during that time, most of the germs or the unhealthy bacteria in the milk is destroyed. Because it doesn't get to the boiling point, the proteins and the enzymes and the nutrients in the milk are not destroyed, but the bacteria and the germs that could cause illness are almost completely eliminated.

[Susan Laird] Well, is selling or distributing raw milk legal in the United States?

[Dr. Aghoghovbia] Each state has its own law. In Kansas, for instance, you're allowed to sell milk at the dairy – unpasteurized milk at the dairy - that's on-site, but you're not allowed to sell it off-site, for instance, take it to a retail store or any other place. But it differs from one state to another. Some states allow the sale of raw milk in supermarkets, as long as it is noted as such on the bottle or the container.

[Susan Laird] What does CDC recommend?

[Dr. Aghoghovbia] CDC, largely, as it has always done, leaves it to the states, but we really, in light of the severe complications that may occur, we recommend stricter regulation of the sale and distribution of raw milk and raw milk products.

[Susan Laird] So how can our listeners be sure that their milk has been pasteurized?

[Dr. Aghoghovbia] Well, they would have to check and see that it's on the pack. That's the only way they would be sure that their milk is pasteurized; it will be written on the container.

[Susan Laird] Where can listeners get more information about pasteurized milk?

[Dr. Aghoghovbia] Listeners can get more information on pasteurized milk if they go to the FDA website at www.fda.gov and search on "raw milk."

[Susan Laird] Thanks, Dr. Aghoghovbia. I've been talking today with Dr. Titilayo Aghoghovbia, a researcher with CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service, about the importance of pasteurized milk. In order to prevent serious illness, we've learned it's really important to be sure all our milk products are pasteurized before we eat or drink them.

Until next time, be well. This is Susan Laird for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.