

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu**Milk - For the Health of It?**

People who drink milk usually choose it because they think it's healthy or good for them. We promote milk and dairy products because of the good protein, lots of calcium and other nutrients milk provides. Generations of people suffered illnesses such as brucellosis, salmonellosis and other infections from dairy products. But with the development of the pasteurization process, by the late 19th century those numbers began to drop. In 1948 Michigan was the first state to require that milk sold there had to be pasteurized. So why are more people getting sick from milk and cheese these days?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention just released the results of their latest survey on illnesses related to milk and cheese. Across the country, about 1% of all the milk sold is raw or unpasteurized. Some people only want to drink or use raw milk, thinking that it has extra health benefits. Thirty states allow the sale of raw milk for some use. Yet, of the outbreaks of illness due to milk from 1993 to 2006, 73 outbreaks were caused by raw milk, but only 48 came from pasteurized milk or dairy products. Those 73 outbreaks made 1,571 people sick, put 202 people in the hospital and killed 2 people. The risk of getting sick from raw milk was 150 times higher than from pasteurized milk!

Those numbers are scary enough, but some other details are worse. While people of all ages got sick, many more of the illnesses from raw milk were in young people. About 60% of the people drinking raw milk were under 20 years old, but only 23% of the people drinking pasteurized milk were that young. More young people get

sick from raw milk. That may be because many families think raw milk is better for children. But they get sick easier, are less able to fight off infections, and are more likely to get seriously ill from an infection.

Cheese made from raw milk also caused more serious illnesses than cheese made from pasteurized milk. There were 27 outbreaks caused by raw milk cheese, compared to 38 from pasteurized cheeses. But those 27 outbreaks put 341 people or 13% in hospitals, and killed 2. In comparison, cheese from pasteurized milk put 37 people, only 1%, in the hospital, and 1 died. One percent compared to 13%, that's a big difference!

The illnesses carried by raw milk are a scary bunch. Salmonella bacteria are ones we usually think of in milk. But E. coli, Campylobacter, Brucella and Listeria also caused a lot of deaths. Salmonella and E. coli infections kill people every year. We're familiar with them. Listeria and Brucella are not as common. They kill people too, but neither of them give us diarrhea or vomiting like most 'food poisonings' do. These bacteria cause meningitis and encephalitis, infections in the brain or nerves. Brucella infections also like to get in around the heart. Listeria often causes miscarriages.

Where do these bacteria come from? Many of them come from the cows. Brucella is common in cows as well as goats, dogs and pigs. Some of them can be carried by people too. About half of the outbreaks from the pasteurized milk were traced to an infected food handler, someone who touched or contaminated the milk after it was pasteurized. And most of the rest from the pasteurized milk came because people did not keep it refrigerated.

What could we learn from this report? Raw milk can cause a lot of problems.

There's no evidence that it has any health benefits, but a lot of evidence that it is risky. Before we had pasteurization lots of people got sick. Now there's no reason to be sick. If you buy fresh milk, make sure it's pasteurized. If you buy cheese, either choose the kinds made from pasteurized milk or be sure it is a hard, aged cheese, not a soft one.

Here an easy recipe that the children can help make, and it might even get them to eat their peas! Let them chop the celery. You could use low fat yogurt instead of salad dressing, and chopped green pepper instead of the relish if you want.

Green Peas and Cheese Salad

1 can (16 oz) green peas	½ cup low-fat cheese, finely diced
2 Tbsp onion, finely chopped	2 Tbsp celery, finely chopped
1 Tbsp pickle relish	¼ cup salad dressing or low-fat mayo

Drain peas, rinse and drain again. Put peas in bowl with all the other ingredients and mix well. Chill at least 1 hour before serving. Keep leftovers in refrigerator. Serves 5.