

Study Shows Once and for All That Raw Milk Doesn't Help Lactose Intolerance

March 10, 2014

TIME

Unpasteurized "raw" milk has become popular with some drinkers who say it's better for the lactose-intolerant among us despite FDA warnings against it, but a new study says raw milk causes the same symptoms seen in folks who can't drink the regular stuff

...Only a small population of people drink unpasteurized milk, also known as "raw" milk, but its increasing popularity has some medical groups concerned. Some raw milk advocates argue that it's healthier for us since raw milk contains no antibiotics or hormones, while others say it's better for people with lactose allergies. For its part, the [FDA advises against](#) drinking raw milk, which can contain bacteria from fecal matter and sometimes be fatal, and has long stated that it doesn't help with lactose intolerance. But a new study published in the *Annals of Family Medicine* is definitively poking holes in the allergy theory, by reporting that lactose-intolerant people have the same symptoms from raw and pasteurized milk.

Advocates for raw milk claim that it contains good bacteria that can help with lactose absorption. "When I heard that claim it didn't make sense to me because, regardless of the bacteria, raw milk and pasteurized milk have the same amount of lactose in them," said study author Christopher Gardner, a professor of medicine at the Stanford Prevention Research Center in a statement. "But I liked the idea of taking this on since it seemed like a relatively straightforward and answerable question because the symptoms of lactose-intolerance are immediate."

The study was small, with only 16 lactose-intolerant participants. All 16 tried three different types of milk—raw, pasteurized, and soy—over multiple eight-day periods.

For eight days, the participants were randomly assigned to one of the three milks, and they drank an increasing amount of that milk as the study period went on. They then reported their allergy symptoms, which were usually gas, diarrhea, and cramping, and rated them on a scale of 0 to 10. Their breaths were also measured for hydrogen, which can indicate undigested lactose in the colon and intolerance.

After the first eight days of drinking one type of milk, the participants took a week off where they drank no milk, and then started up again with another eight days of a different type of milk. To mask which type of milk participants were drinking, researchers randomized the order and added sugar-free vanilla syrup. Soy, which doesn't contain lactose, acted as the control.

⚡ Researchers found no differences in the hydrogen breath tests between consuming pasteurized or unpasteurized milk. Participants also rated their symptom severity the same, regardless of the type of milk they drank.

Although the study is small, it brings into question the benefits of raw milk for people with lactose intolerance. "It's not that there was a trend toward a benefit from raw milk and our study wasn't big enough to capture it; it's that there was no hint of any benefit," said Gardner in a statement.

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) off CDC website-January 26, 2015

- CDC. Notes from the Field: *Salmonella* Newport Infections Associated with Consumption of Unpasteurized Milk --- Utah, April--June 2010. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2010;59:817-818.
- CDC. *Campylobacter jejuni* infection associated with unpasteurized milk and cheese--Kansas, 2007. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2009;57:1377-1379.
- CDC. Outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* Infections Associated with Pasteurized Milk from a Local Dairy --- Massachusetts, 2007. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2008;57:1097-1100.
- CDC. *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 infections in children associated with raw milk and raw colostrum from cows--California, 2006. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2008;57:625-628.
- CDC. Outbreak of multidrug-resistant *Salmonella enterica* serotype Newport infections associated with consumption of unpasteurized Mexican-style aged cheese--Illinois, March 2006-April 2007. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2008;57:432-435.
- CDC. *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 Infection Associated with Drinking Raw Milk --- Washington and Oregon, November--December 2005. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2007;56:165-167.
- CDC. *Salmonella* Typhimurium Infection Associated with Raw Milk and Cheese Consumption --- Pennsylvania, 2007. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2007;56:1161-1164.
- CDC. Multistate Outbreak of *Salmonella* Serotype Typhimurium Infections Associated with Drinking Unpasteurized Milk --- Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Tennessee, 2002--2003. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2003;52:613-615.
- CDC. Outbreak of *Campylobacter jejuni* Infections Associated with Drinking Unpasteurized Milk Procured through a Cow-Leasing Program --- Wisconsin, 2001. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2002;51:548-549.
- CDC. Outbreak of Listeriosis Associated With Homemade Mexican-Style Cheese --- North Carolina, October 2000--January 2001. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2001;50:560-2.
- CDC. Outbreak of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 Infection Associated With Eating Fresh Cheese Curds --- Wisconsin, June 1998. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2000;49:911-3.
- CDC. *Campylobacter* Outbreak Associated with Certified Raw Milk Products--California. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 1984;33(39):562.
- CDC. Campylobacteriosis Associated with Raw Milk Consumption - Pennsylvania. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 1982;32:337-8,344.

[Top of Page](#)

Other Publications

- Honish L, Predy G, Hislop N, et al. An outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 hemorrhagic colitis associated with unpasteurized gouda cheese. *Can J Public Health*. 2005;96(3):182-4.
- Headrick ML, Korangy S, Bean NH, et al. The epidemiology of raw milk-associated foodborne disease outbreaks reported in the United States, 1973 through 1992. *Am J Public Health*. 1998;88(8):1219-21.

- Keene WE, Hedberg K, Herriott DE, et al. A prolonged outbreak of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 infections caused by commercially distributed raw milk. *J Infect Dis.* 1997;176(3):815-8.
- Fishbein DB, Raoult D. A cluster of *Coxiella burnetii* infections associated with exposure to vaccinated goats and their unpasteurized dairy products. *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 1992;47(1):35-40.
- Taylor JP, Perdue JN. The changing epidemiology of human brucellosis in Texas, 1977-1986. *Am J Epidemiol.* 1989;130(1):160-5.
- Schmid GP, Schaefer RE, Plikaytis BD, et al. A one-year study of endemic campylobacteriosis in a midwestern city: association with consumption of raw milk. *J Infect Dis.* 1987;156(1):218-22.
- Osterholm MT, MacDonald KL, White KE, et al. An outbreak of a newly recognized chronic diarrhea syndrome associated with raw milk consumption. *JAMA.* 1986;256(4):484-90.
- Potter ME, Kaufmann AF, Blake PA, Feldman RA. Unpasteurized milk. The hazards of a health fetish. *JAMA.* 1984;252(15):2048-52.
- Potter ME, Blaser MJ, Sikes RK, et al. Human *Campylobacter* infection associated with certified raw milk. *Am J Epidemiol.* 1983;117(4):475-83.
- Taylor DN, Porter BW, Williams CA, et al. *Campylobacter enteritis*: a large outbreak traced to commercial raw milk. *West J Med.* 1982;137(5):365-9.
- Chin J. Raw milk: a continuing vehicle for the transmission of infectious disease agents in the United States. *J Infect Dis.* 1982;146(3):440-1.
- Doyle MP, Roman DJ. Prevalence and survival of *Campylobacter jejuni* in unpasteurized milk. *Appl Environ Microbiol.* 1982;44(5):1154-8.
- Taylor DN, Bied JM, Munro JS, Feldman RA. *Salmonella Dublin* infections in the United States, 1979-1980. *J Infect Dis.* 1982;146(3):322-7.
- Blaser MJ, Cravens J, Powers BW, et al. *Campylobacter enteritis* associated with unpasteurized milk. *Am J Med.* 1979;67(4):715-8.