

FAQ about Raw Milk

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Q: Is all raw milk the same?

A: No! There is a lot of variation due to the many factors that go into its formation. What the cow is fed, how and where it's raised, how the milk is collected all play important roles in its safety and quality. Cows pastured on organic green grass produce milk with amazing health benefits.

Q: Won't raw milk make me sick?

A: Not if it is properly collected from cows fed organic grass (and a minimum of grain). Heavy grain diets change the composition of the milk and hinder its ability to protect itself. Grass-fed milk has natural antibiotic properties that help protect it (and those lucky enough to drink it) from pathogenic bacteria. If you've been using pasteurized dairy products, you might want to eat small amounts of yogurt or kefir for a week or so, to give your digestive tract a probiotic boost, before switching to raw milk.

Q: What is [pasteurization](#)?

A: Adapted to partially sterilize raw foods (from a technique originally invented by French scientist Louis Pasteur for use on beer and wine), pasteurization is a heating process designed to destroy all bacteria and most enzyme activity. Along with partial sterility, the pasteurized product then has a much longer shelf life. UHT pasteurized milk (totally sterilized) can last for months without refrigeration. Just to be clear, milk that has been pasteurized can no longer be considered 'raw.'

Q: What is [homogenization](#)?

A: Homogenization is the process of forcing whole milk through small orifices under very high pressure. This breaks the fat globules into much smaller particles and prevents the cream from rising to the top. The intense pressure also subjects the milk to high heat for a second time, alters color, flavor and, very likely, nutritional value of the end product.

Q: I'm [lactose](#) intolerant. Can I drink raw milk?

A: Chances are good that you may, even if you're of African or Asian descent, assuming you can find a reliable source near your home. Unheated milk contains its full complement of enzymes and lactase-producing bacteria needed by our bodies to break down and assimilate the milk sugar lactose. These helpful bacteria are killed in the pasteurization/homogenization process. Fermented milk products, such as yogurt and kefir, naturally lower in lactose due to the actions of various *Lactobacillus* and other lactic acid-producing bacteria, may be better tolerated by some.

Q: What if I'm allergic to milk?

A: While a valuable food, dairy products, raw or otherwise, are not everyone's cup of tea. Milk allergies are very real and serious threats today - just ask any pediatrician. Barring the small percentage of folks allergic to all forms of the milk protein casein, you *might* be able to tolerate raw milk with its self-digesting food enzymes intact. Again, fermented dairy products *may* be better tolerated by some individuals.

Q: What about the saturated [fat](#) and [cholesterol](#) in milk?

A: These two very controversial but extremely essential substances are found in every cell membrane in our bodies. Without them, we'd soon die. There's far too much to discuss in a few sentences, so click on the two links above to learn more about why these two important ingredients of whole, raw milk are so crucial to your health.

Q: Can anybody drink raw milk?

A: Yes, with a nod to those folks whom it just doesn't suit, but there are a few important exceptions. For infants, there's absolutely no substitute for mother's milk, however, should that be unavailable for some unfortunate reason, [baby formula](#) with raw milk as a base can fill in nicely. Individuals with a compromised immune system, whether due to illness, medication, chemo-therapy or genetic malfunction, *may* be able to drink it, but should consult with a raw milk-friendly medical professional before attempting it.

Q: Doesn't raw milk contain [hormones](#)?

A: Yes, it has trace amounts of naturally occurring hormones and growth factors - key bioactive ingredients that make it such a valuable, healing food. Raw milk, especially that from cows fed organic green grass, isn't just a great tasting food, it's powerful medicine. That's likely one of the major reasons it's unavailable in so many states. After all, we can't have people healing themselves, now can we?

Q: What about raw skim milk?

A: Raw milk from grass-fed cows is a complete and balanced food. You could literally live on it and nothing else for the rest of your life. Not so with skim milk. By removing important fats and fat-soluble vitamins in the skimming process, this once excellent food actually becomes a burden on the body, causing the liver to give up stored nutrients in its digestion. The loss of [CLA](#), pathogen-busting medium-chain triglycerides and vitamin A alone constitutes an unforgivable crime against nature's perfect food. Rather than avoiding fat, take the time to learn why its presence is essential to your health (see fat link above). My advice? Skip the skim. Your body will thank you.

Q: How long will raw milk keep?

A: When kept at the optimal temperature of 36-38° F. (2.2-3.3°C.) you can expect fresh raw milk to last from 7-10 days. Higher temperatures allow the normally occurring lactobacilli to get busy making lactic acid, which gives soured milk its characteristically tangy taste and reduces its shelf life. Bring a cooler bag and ice or gel packs with you when buying milk on hot summer days or if you have a long drive home - it'll stay fresher tasting longer.

Q: Can raw milk be used in cooking?

A: Ideally, no. The whole idea behind *not* pasteurizing milk straight from the cow is to preserve the delicate bioactive factors it contains. When heated to cooking temperatures or poured into coffee or tea close to the boiling point, you're effectively pasteurizing it and thus depriving yourself of the beneficial enzymes, immunoglobulins and other factors it contains, as well as increasing its allergenicity. Hi-speed blending can physically damage raw milk as well, so if you like smoothies, puree the other ingredients first, *then* stir in the raw milk.

Q: Is it okay to freeze raw milk (i.e. is there any nutritional loss)?

A: Depending on who you ask (or who funded the study) freezing raw milk has either 'no appreciable effect' on nutritive value, or it substantially impacts flavor, texture and consistency. I can vouch for the off-taste and altered mouth-feel. To me, frozen is less ideal than fresh but it can work. One study found vitamins B-6 and C levels reduced by freezing, another noted disruption of fat globules (probably the reason taste is altered), hydrolysis of triglycerides and decreased linoleic and linolenic fatty acid levels. There is fairly general agreement that the longer it remains frozen, the greater the loss of bacterial inhibiting ability. But whether all that adds up to detrimental? Good question. I find freezing tantamount to processing because the thawed product differs significantly from that straight out of the cow. I don't think it'll hurt you, assuming it came from clean, grass-fed animals, but for me, fresh is much more preferable than frozen, if only from an enjoyment standpoint.

