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(75)

Overview of Illnesses Associated with Raw Milk Consumption

Summary of selected bacterial pathogens that can be found in raw milk

Organism	Incubation Period	Symptoms	High-risk Groups
Campylobacter	1-10 days	Diarrhea (often bloody), abdominal pain, malaise, fever, nausea, vomiting	Children under age 5, young adults, immunosuppressed
Salmonella	6-72 hours	Fever, headache, abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting	Infants, the elderly, immunosuppressed
E. coli O157:H7	2-10 days	Diarrhea (can be bloody), hemolytic uremic syndrome	Children under age 5, the elderly
Listeria	3-70 days	Encephalitis, septicemia, coma, fever, headache, nausea, vomiting. Usually results in spontaneous abortion in pregnant women. Fatality approximately 35% in adults and 50% in newborns.	Pregnant women, fetuses, newborns, immunosuppressed, the elderly, alcoholic or diabetic adults

In 1938, before milk pasteurization was widespread, an estimated 25 percent of all foodborne outbreaks were associated with milk. By 2001, this percentage was estimated at <1%.¹

During 1973-1992, raw milk was associated with 46 outbreaks. Most of these occurred in states in which the sale of raw milk was legal.²

An article published in 2012 reviewed outbreaks related to dairy products from 1993 through 2006.³ During that time period, 121 outbreaks that were reported to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and related to dairy products were reviewed. Sixty percent of these outbreaks involved unpasteurized dairy products and caused 1,571 illnesses, 202 hospitalizations and two deaths. Seventy-five percent of the outbreaks occurred in the 21 states that allow sale of unpasteurized milk. Fifty-six outbreaks were linked to the consumption of fluid milk, and 82 percent of these involved unpasteurized milk.

Because not all cases of foodborne illness are recognized and reported, the actual number of illnesses associated with raw milk is likely greater.

¹ Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. Grade "A" pasteurized milk ordinance: 2001 revision. FDA 2002. Available at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~ear/pmo01.html>.

² Headrick ML, Korany S, Bean NH, et al. The epidemiology of raw milk-associated foodborne disease outbreaks reported in the United States, 1973 through 1992. Am J Pub Health 1998;88:1219-1221.

³ Langer AJ, Ayers T, Grass J, Lynch M, Angulo FJ, Mahon BE. Nonpasteurized dairy products, disease outbreaks, and state laws—United States, 1993–2006. Emerg Infect Dis [serial on the Internet]. 2012 Mar [Accessed Feb 19, 2013] <http://dx.doi.org/10.3201/eid1803.111370>.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet): Population Survey Atlas of Exposures*. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2006-2007.



Examples of United States Outbreaks Associated with Raw Milk

Year	Pathogen	State(s)	Number of Cases	Outcomes
2010	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	NH	5	5 hospitalized, 1 death
2010	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>	NY	20	1 hospitalized, no deaths
2009	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>	WI	52	1 hospitalized, no deaths
2008	<i>E. coli</i> O157	CT	14	5 hospitalized, no deaths
2008	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>	PA	65	1 hospitalized, no deaths
2007	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium	PA	29	2 hospitalized, no deaths
2007	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>	KS	68	2 hospitalized, no deaths
2005	<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	WA, OR	18	5 hospitalized, 4 hemolytic uremic syndrome
2002-2003	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium	IL, IN, OH, TN	62	
2001	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>	WI	75	None hospitalized
2000-2001	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	NC	12	5 stillbirths, 3 premature deliveries

Vermont Outbreaks Associated with Raw Milk

2010 Outbreaks

In 2010 the Vermont Department of Health investigated three outbreaks of campylobacter infection associated with raw milk consumption. The first outbreak occurred in June among guests of a B&B and included two farm workers who worked on the dairy farm where the B&B was located. A total of four confirmed and six probable cases (symptoms consistent with campylobacter infection but no confirmatory lab test available) were identified. Two of the confirmed cases were small children visiting from Connecticut. One of the children experienced febrile seizures and had to be taken to an Emergency Department. The common exposure among the cases was drinking raw milk. The B&B owner did not sell raw milk, but incorrectly assumed that the current law allowed her to serve raw milk to her guests.

The second outbreak occurred in August 2010 and involved inmates at a work camp associated with a correctional facility. While painting fences at a nearby dairy farm, the work crew was offered raw milk to drink by the owner of the farm. Five of the 10 inmates and the crew officer developed a diarrheal illness within a few days of drinking the raw milk. Three of the cases submitted stool samples that tested positive for *Campylobacter* sp. All of the ill people drank the raw milk.

The third outbreak occurred in December and involved students on a field trip to a local dairy farm. Ten students and one teacher became ill with diarrheal illness after visiting the farm. Two people visited Emergency Departments and submitted stool samples that tested positive for *Campylobacter* sp. Cases were ill for an average of six days, and 80 percent missed at least one day of school. All of the cases drank raw milk, which was offered during the field trip at the end of the farm tour.

In October 2010, a Vermont resident became ill with *E. coli* O157:H7 infection. This person had been traveling in Washington prior to becoming ill. An investigation by the Oregon and Washington health departments implicated a raw milk cheese that was produced in Washington.

Outbreaks – Prior Years

In 2008 the Vermont Department of Health investigated a cluster of two *E. coli* O157:H7 cases among picnic attendees. An additional case was confirmed in a person living near the picnic site. The DNA fingerprint of the third *E. coli* isolate was closely related to that of the other two cases, suggesting that the pathogens were acquired from the same source. The only epidemiologic link between the third case and the other two is that the third case consumed raw milk from the same local farm that supplied raw milk for ice cream made at the picnic. This epidemiologic evidence suggests that the raw milk was the source of illness among these cases of *E. coli* O157:H7.

In 2003 the Health Department investigated a campylobacter outbreak among employees at a Vermont farm. Contact with raw milk, cheese curds, and animals were statistically related to illness. There is some evidence to suggest that cattle have increased shedding of the organism during calving and weaning. This may account for the outbreak of campylobacter coinciding with calving on the farm.

In 1982 the Health Department investigated a community outbreak of 15 cases of gastroenteritis that was linked to consumption of raw milk from a licensed dairy. The outbreak was caused by *Campylobacter jejuni*. Over half the cases had bloody diarrhea and one child was hospitalized. The average length of illness was 7.2 days. Six additional *Campylobacter* outbreaks between 1982 and 1987 were traced to raw milk.

PulseNet

PulseNet is a national network of public health and food regulatory agency laboratories. PulseNet laboratories perform standardized molecular subtyping (DNA “fingerprinting”) of foodborne disease-causing bacteria by pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE). PFGE can be used to distinguish strains of organisms such as *E. coli* O157:H7, *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, or *Campylobacter* at the DNA level. DNA “fingerprints,” or patterns, are used to identify common source outbreaks.

Vermont Case Data

Between 2003 and 2012, 195 Vermonters with *Campylobacter* infection reported consuming raw milk. Most reported other risk factors as well, such as contact with farm animals. Even so, it is likely that some of those illnesses were caused by raw milk.

Percentage of Campylobacter Cases in Vermont with Raw Milk Exposure										
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Cases who drank raw milk	32	6	15	19	11	24	25	24	24	15
Total cases	142	105	104	110	154	158	158	195	233	169
Percent who drank raw milk	22.5%	5.7%	14.4%	17.3%	7.1%	15.2%	15.8%	12.3%	10.3%	8.9%

According to FoodNet, the CDC’s foodborne disease surveillance system, 3.0 percent of Americans surveyed in 2006-2007 had consumed raw milk in the seven days prior to the survey.⁴ The percentage of Vermonters with *Campylobacter* who consumed raw milk is higher than 3.0 percent for each of the past eight years. This data suggests that raw milk consumption may have been the source of illness in some of these cases.

