

Overview of Illnesses Associated with Raw Milk Consumption

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

Organism	Incubation Period	Symptoms	S	High-risk Groups
Campylobacter	1-10 days	Diarrhea (often bloody), abdominal pain, malaise, fever, nausea, vomiting		Children under age 5, young adults, immunosuppressed Infants, the elderly, immunosuppressed
Salmonella	6-72 hours	Fever, headache, abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting		
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% 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

From 2007 to 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Outbreak Reporting System received reports indicating:

- 81 outbreaks of infections due to consumption of raw milk resulting in 979 illnesses, 73 hospitalizations, and no deaths.
- 6 Most infections were caused by *Campylobacter*, Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli*, or *Salmonella* bacteria, pathogens that are carried by cattle that appear healthy.
- The number of outbreaks increased during this time, from 30 in the three year span 2007-2009 to 51 in 2010-2012.
- **Eighty-one percent of outbreaks were reported from states where the sale of raw milk was legal in some form; only 19% occurred in states where the sale of raw milk was illegal.**

The reported outbreaks represent only the tip of the iceberg. For every outbreak and illness that is reported, many others occur that are not reported; the actual number of illnesses associated with raw milk and raw milk products is likely much greater.

It is important to note that a substantial proportion of the raw milk-associated disease burden falls on children; 59 % of outbreaks involved at least one person aged <5 years.³

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

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

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

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/pdfs/raw-milk-letter-to-states-2014-508c.pdf>

Examples of United States Outbreaks Associated with Raw Milk

Year	Pathogen	State(s)	Number of Cases	Notes
2014	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>	WI	38	Students; 10 hospitalized or visited ED
2014	Shiga toxin producing- <i>E. coli</i>	KY	5	All children, 4 hospitalized, 1 kidney failure
2013	<i>Salmonella</i> (cheese)	MN	25	15 hospitalized, no deaths
2012	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>	PA	148	10 hospitalized; Same dairy had another, outbreak in 2013
2011	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>	WI	16	1 hospitalized, no deaths
2010	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	NY	5	5 hospitalized, 1 death
2009	<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	4	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 3 outbreaks of campylobacter infection associated with raw milk consumption. The first outbreak occurred in June among guests of a B&B and included 2 farm workers who worked on the dairy farm where the B&B was located. A total of 4 confirmed and 6 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 ten 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 which 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 which tested positive for *Campylobacter sp.* Cases were ill for an average of 6 days, and 80% 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* 0157: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* 0157:H7.

In 2003 the Department of Health 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 Department of Health 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* 0157: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 2014, 232 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 consumption.

Percentage of Campylobacter Cases in Vermont with Reported Raw Milk Exposure

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Cases who drank raw milk	32	6	15	19	11	24	25	24	24	15	20	17
	14 ²	195	104	110	Total cases 154	158	158	195	233	- 169	184	178
Percent; who drank raw milk	22.5%	5.7% ^{X?}	14.4%	17.3%	7.1%	15.2%	15.8%	12.3%	10.3%	8.9%	10.9%	10.5%

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

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.

