

Health Unit Media Release

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Contact: Dr. Anne Carter, MD, MHSc, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health, 613-345-5685 or 1-800-660-5853

Make no mistake – Drinking unpasteurized milk is not good for you.

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit is aware that raw milk may become available to people in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark counties. **The Health Unit recommends that you do not consume unpasteurized milk.**

Pasteurization, developed by Louis Pasteur in the mid 1800s, is a process by which heat is used to destroy harmful bacteria (pathogens) without significantly affecting the nutritional value of milk. In addition to this, pasteurization also destroys bacteria that cause spoilage thus extending the shelf life of the product. **Pasteurization is one of the most significant developments in the history of preventing food-borne disease.**

Since its adoption, pasteurization has dramatically reduced illness and death caused by contaminated milk. **Some of the diseases that it prevents are: tuberculosis, diphtheria, polio, scarlet fever, typhoid fever, salmonellosis, listeriosis and E. coli 0157 infection (the same disease that caused the deadly drink water related outbreak in Walkerton, Ontario).**

People who drink unpasteurized milk can suffer from severe diarrhea, stomach cramps or abdominal pain, vomiting, fever, weakness and chills. Young children, the elderly, people who are ill, pregnant woman and those with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable to becoming seriously ill. Giving your children raw (untreated) milk or eating raw milk products is like playing Russian roulette with their health and lives.

While advocates claim that unprocessed milk is healthier, this is simply not the case! **Research has shown that there is no significant difference in the nutritional value of pasteurized and unpasteurized milk.** The majority of nutrients are left unchanged by pasteurization and Vitamin A and D are added to processed milk. The latter enhances the body's absorption of the calcium in the milk.

What makes drinking raw milk even more dangerous is that there is the potential for the bacteria that has caused an individual to become ill, through drinking raw milk, to infect others who haven't consumed the product. **Many of the infections caused by raw milk can be passed on from person-to-person by hand-to-mouth contact.**

Dr. Anne Carter, Medical Officer of Health, states, "because of these serious and sometimes fatal consequences, it is against the law in Ontario to sell, offer to sell, deliver or distribute raw milk."

Ontario Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and his government continue to strongly endorse and support the enforcement of pasteurization of milk for public safety. Pasteurization markedly increases the safety of milk and milk products and reduces the risk of significant food-borne illness for all Ontarians.

If you would like to report the availability of raw milk in the tri-county area or would like more information about raw milk or food borne illness, contact Jane Lyster, Director of Health Protection, at the Health Unit at 613-345-5685 or 1-800-660-5853 or log onto our website at www.healthunit.org.