

NUTRITIONAL VALUE OF RAW VS. PASTEURIZED MILK

Apr 20, 2011 | By Jessica Brusio

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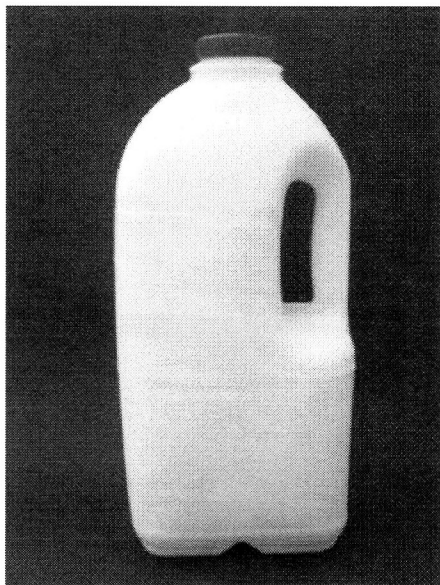


Photo Credit Container of milk. Plastic milk bottle image by L. Shat from Fotolia.com

Proponents of raw milk say this type of milk is healthier and that pasteurization destroys enzymes that can help protect drinkers of raw milk from a number of different health conditions. However, the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, says raw milk is not safe and that pasteurization does not significantly affect the nutrient content of milk.

PROCESS FROM COW TO DAIRY CASE

Raw milk goes from the cow to a holding tank, where it is kept for about 20 minutes before being bottled and cooled in ice water, then placed in a refrigerator case, ready to be sold. Pasteurized milk goes from the cow to a cooled tank, where it is stored for a few days before being transferred to a tanker truck and taken to a bottling plant. At the plant, milk is pasteurized and homogenized, which makes it so the fat doesn't float to the top of the milk, vitamin D is added, and the milk is bottled. Refrigeration trucks then bring the pasteurized milk to stores to be sold.

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NUTRIENT CONTENT

Pasteurized milk is fortified with vitamin D, and sometimes vitamin A. Raw milk is not, so it isn't a good source of these nutrients. However, raw milk has a slightly higher amount of certain vitamins and minerals. Pasteurization lowers thiamine and vitamin E levels by less than 5 percent and biotin and vitamin B-12 by less than 10 percent, according to the University of Minnesota.

SAFETY

The FDA considers raw milk unsafe because it might contain harmful amounts of bacteria that cause food-borne illnesses, including salmonella, listeria, brucella, E. coli, yersinia and campylobacter. These can cause life-threatening illnesses and are especially dangerous for small children, pregnant women and those with compromised immune systems.

CONSIDERATIONS

If you drink raw milk, you might build up an immunity to any bacteria present in the milk from the farm where you get your raw milk. However, you shouldn't give this milk to visitors or other people because they might not have this same immunity. You could still get sick if bacteria levels increase.

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