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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Unpasteurized milk products pose risks to children

Purchasing milk and other dairy products from local farmers and farmer's markets may be seen as a healthy, green alternative to supermarket shopping during the summer months. But before allowing children to consume dairy-containing foods, parents should read labels and ask vendors to confirm that the products have been pasteurized.

Pasteurizing, or heating food to 161 degrees for 15 seconds then immediately cooling it, significantly reduces the risk of disease such as gastrointestinal illness and death from *Salmonella* species, *Campylobacter* species, *Escherichia coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Brucella* species and tuberculosis.

Locally produced dairy products such as milk, butter, cheese, yogurt, ice cream and kefir that are fed to children should be made from milk that has been pasteurized, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Children and individuals who have lowered immune systems are at considerable risk of complications from consuming unpasteurized, contaminated dairy products. Diseases can be caused when bacteria are introduced from the soil, animal diseases or feces, or a sick farm worker during processing.

Symptoms of illness from unpasteurized dairy include

vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, headache and body aches. The AAP

advises parents who suspect their child has become ill from eating unpasteurized dairy products to seek advice from their pediatrician.

Claims that raw milk offers increased health benefits have not been proven, according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Pasteurizing only slightly affects the amount of thiamine, vitamin B6, folic acid and vitamin C in milk. The FDA is investigating the belief that aging cheeses for 60 days will kill disease-causing bacteria. Some of these cheeses can be found in supermarket dairy cases.

Although about half of all states allow farms to sell unpasteurized milk and other dairy products to the public, the FDA bans the sale of such products across state lines.

— Trisha Koriath



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