



What You Need to Know About Milk



It's a fact—dairy delivers great taste and good nutrition! It's also a fact that many safeguards and regulations are in place to ensure the delicious dairy foods you buy are safe, wholesome and nutritious. Below are answers to some frequently asked questions about milk.

MILK SAFETY

Question: Why do farmers treat cows with antibiotics?

Answer: Sometimes cows get sick, just as humans do. Without proper medical care, they could become seriously ill or may die. Like humans, cows are only given antibiotics when they are sick. The milk from a cow treated with antibiotics is discarded and does not reach the food supply.

Question: Are there antibiotics in milk?

Answer: All milk is tested for the most commonly used antibiotics upon delivery at the dairy plant. Any milk that tests positive cannot be sold to the public. Strict government standards and industry protocols ensure that pasteurized milk is wholesome, safe and nutritious.

Question: Are there hormones added to milk?

Answer: Some farmers treat their cows with a synthetic form of the naturally occurring hormone bovine somatotropin, known as rBST or rBGH, as a method to help with more efficient milk production. All milk naturally contains very small amounts of hormones, and studies show that there are no significant differences in hormone levels between milk from treated or untreated cows.

Question: Is it safe to serve my family raw or unpasteurized milk?

Answer: Health experts recommend that you and your family consume only pasteurized dairy foods. Consuming unpasteurized or “raw” milk presents severe food safety risks, which is why the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) strongly support pasteurization. Pasteurization is a simple, effective method to kill harmful pathogens, such as E. coli and salmonella, without affecting the taste or nutritional value of milk.

MILK QUALITY



Question: What is “rBST-free” milk?

Answer: Some dairy processors label milk from cows not treated with supplemental hormones such as bovine somatotropin, or rBST. FDA regulations reinforce that this milk is no different than conventionally produced milk.

Question: What is different about organic milk?

Answer: The term organic simply refers to on-farm practices. All milk produced in the United States must adhere to the same strict federal standards for quality, purity and sanitation. Those using the “USDA organic” seal must ensure that the milk comes from dairy farms that meet the following criteria:

- Cows are exclusively given food grown without the use of pesticides or commercial fertilizers.
- Cows are given periodic access to pasture.
- Cows are not treated with supplemental hormones.
- Cows have not been given certain medications to treat illness.

Many conventional dairy farmers use these same management practices but choose not to undergo the organic certification process.

Question: Is organic milk better for me and my family than regular milk?

Answer: Organic and regular milk are equally nutritious and wholesome. Check the nutrition label and you’ll see that every 8-ounce serving offers the same amount of nine essential nutrients, including calcium, vitamin D and potassium. According to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, conventionally produced food and organically produced food are equally safe and nutritious. Organic milk is just one of many options in the dairy case to fit different lifestyles and personal preferences.

Question: What is the best/safest way to store dairy products?

Answer: Dairy foods are perishable and should always be kept refrigerated at or below 40°F, to keep harmful bacteria from growing. Storing foods properly at the right temperature will help maintain their freshness, quality and safety. To find out more about general safety tips for storing dairy products, as well as guidelines to follow during a power outage, go to dairyspot.com.

Question: Where can I go for more information about milk and dairy farming?

Answer: For additional nutritional information, check out dairyspot.com or nationaldairycouncil.org. If you would like more information about life on a dairy farm, visit dairyfarmingtoday.org.

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