OPINION & CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES

Raw Milk: A Mother's Story

BY **MARY MCGONIGLE-MARTIN** | APR 11, 2012

OPINION

My interest in health and nutrition began some 30 years ago. At 19 I quit smoking and for the first time in my life put on some extra pounds. (I'm sure it had something to do with the Hershey chocolate bars I consumed to ward off each and every cigarette craving.) Anyway, these extra pounds motivated my investigation of weight loss diets and I was horrified to discover that everything I'd been consuming my entire life was in essence a physiological time bomb. Processed foods are bad for you? Who could have known? And how could this be? I mean, if processed foods hurt people, why are they allowed to be sold?

Having always been an avid reader I was amazed to discover a world replete with nutritional information regarding diet and how to eat healthy. I slowly transformed my bad habits. I quit my job at a fast food restaurant and went to work in a vitamin store. Running replaced my affinity for cigarettes and my former assortment of junk food was nowhere to be found in the health food store I now regularly found myself.

Studying food labels became the rule, and I shunned any artificial flavorings, colorings, chemicals or preservatives. I juiced, ate fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, yogurt and baked chicken and fish. Raw eggs, milk and cheese also became part of my new diet after I came across encouraging literature regarding their benefits. (Raw milk is legal in California, so its purchase only required a quick trip to the health food store.)

My fervent dedication to eating well lasted for several years. When my husband entered my life, it became very difficult to maintain the purity of my diet. As time passed, I continued to eat healthier than most of my peers, but not as strict as I had for those few years in my late teens and early 20s.

A search for possible answers to ADD

After college, my husband and I both entered the field of education. I work as a school counselor and he teaches government and economics. In 1995 we bought our second home and in December of 1998 we adopted our son Christopher Chase Martin. Life was good.

At approximately four years of age, our son demonstrated signs of Attention Deficit Disorder without hyperactivity. He was a very bright child. He could recite the alphabet at 17 months, but could not stay focused

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when playing board games or any activity requiring focusing or fine motor skills like coloring and writing letters. He would tell me that it was too hard.

Kindergarten confirmed my suspicions. Homework time was filled with frustration, which typically led to meltdowns. He could not complete homework without one parent sitting with him to keep him focused and on task. At our first parent/teacher conference, his teacher informed us about his focusing issues in the classroom.

ADD is caused by a dopamine deficiency that occurs in the prefrontal cortex of the brain. ADD medication increases the dopamine level in that part of the brain, allowing it to work properly. I felt that Chris was too young to be placed on stimulant medication (a form of amphetamine) so I searched for natural ways to increase his dopamine levels.

Some say children with ADD should avoid artificial colors, flavors, preservatives, white flour and white sugar. Chris rarely consumed any of these items. Reducing sugar of all kinds, including juice and even honey, is strongly encouraged. However, the significant challenge we faced was removing dairy and wheat from his diet, a must due to the discovery that many children and adults with ADD have food sensitivities to these products.

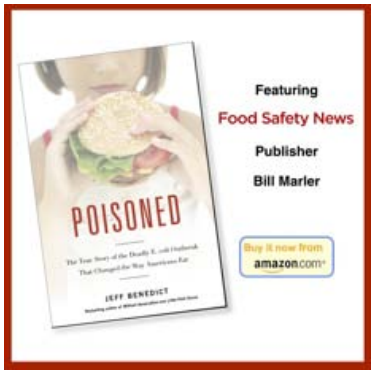
Chris is a picky eater and all of his favorite foods contained dairy and wheat. I started by reducing wheat-based products and replacing them with baked, gluten-free products. Important vitamins and minerals, including more omega 3s, were added and we immediately noticed a profound effect on Chris. Within two weeks he did homework without the normal fuss and his handwriting improved dramatically. The teacher reported that his on-task behavior had also improved in the classroom.

All was not perfect, however. A couple of years passed and Chris was still beset with several symptoms of ADD, although nowhere near as severe as they had been. He was slower than other children in completing his school work--but he finished it. He still needed help with homework and one parent would always assist in that regard. Extensive writing assignments were difficult because he couldn't stay focused long enough to get everything he wanted to say on paper. To accommodate this weakness, he would verbally communicate what he wanted to say and one parent would type it.

Could raw milk remedy our dairy quandary?

During this time, Chris also faced congestion issues, waking with a stuffy nose and a cough. These symptoms usually dissipated as the day progressed but it did become his normal day. It was disconcerting. I was convinced it was related to dairy consumption but I was semi-paralyzed by the thought of removing his beloved organic pasteurized milk, yogurt and cheese. I was at a loss. If I removed dairy from his diet, what he would eat?

The dairy dilemma was nagging at me until one particular trip to our local health food store. There, in the store window, I saw a poster that would change our lives forever. Organic Pasture Dairy Company was advertising raw milk,



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suggesting relief from lactose intolerance, digestive disorders and asthma. I remembered reading (30 years ago) that raw milk was somehow healthier than pasteurized milk. I began to wonder about raw milk again -- was it the answer to our son's dairy quandary? If he consumed raw milk would it relieve his congestion?

I didn't purchase the milk that day because I also remembered the reason I had stopped drinking raw milk: a Salmonella outbreak involving Alta Dena Dairy that resulted in a recall. Food poisoning is far more serious than I had imagined, but I must admit I was as naïve as most regarding the seriousness of such pathogens. My notion was that the worst one might expect was a stint of diarrhea and vomiting; I had no idea these pathogens could kill you.

Every week after seeing the sign I would stop at the raw milk shelf and consider buying it for Chris. Several times I picked it up only to put it back. Time passed. In the meantime, I had found Dr. Joe Mercola's website and began subscribing to his newsletter. To my surprise, random articles about the purported health benefits of raw milk populated his site. As I read them, I unfortunately started to feel at ease with the idea of drinking raw milk.

I was finally convinced after visiting the Organic Pastures website. I found pleasing claims describing their cows, how they were fed, how their milk was regularly tested and how they had never found a pathogen in all the years they had been in business. Their website also stated that if cows consumed grass they wouldn't harbor pathogens. OPDC cows were advertised as being 100 percent pasture fed. They even posted all of their test results on their website and based upon this information I believed that the milk they produced would be safe for my son to consume. In mid-August, 2006, I purchased a quart of raw milk. I wondered if Chris would like it.

Chris's ordeal from E. coli infection begins

Chris drank raw milk for approximately two weeks. The last bottle he would drink I bought on a Friday and by Monday evening I noticed it was already turning sour. I remember feeling frustrated that I had paid so much money for something that soured so quickly. I dumped the remaining milk down the drain and threw the bottle in the kitchen trash can.

The next evening, September 5, Chris returned home from his martial arts workout with a headache and low grade fever. He did not attend school the next day, due to his lethargic state. He slept most of the day. That evening he felt better and ate a good dinner, but it didn't last. Later that night, the diarrhea started. We thought it best he stay home one more day.

His second day was filled with repeat trips to the bathroom and by early evening we noticed blood in his stool. This discovery prompted an immediate trip to the emergency room. Within an hour of arriving at the hospital, Chris became severely weak. He began vomiting regularly, experienced no relief from the diarrhea and was now in pain.

He became so weak he could not lift himself onto the bedside toilet and required our assistance each time. For the next five days, both day and night, we witnessed our son struggle every 15 to 30 minutes with these ceaseless discharges. Nothing could prepare a parent for this kind of agony as we watched helplessly, praying it would stop. It was a heart wrenching.

Upon entering the emergency room we had no way of knowing that we would not return home or go to work for two months. Chris had a severe case of E.coli 0157:H7 food poisoning that developed into hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). Our son fought a war which he almost lost, against an invisible enemy. The damage done by this bacterium is incomprehensible. Videos about Chris' experience can be found on the Real Raw Milk Facts and CDC websites.

From RealRawMilkFacts.com

Soon it was discovered that five other children had become ill with the same E.coli infection and one other child also developed HUS. Interviews with the families involved determined that the only common food the children had consumed came from Organic Pastures Dairy Company.

Another outbreak linked to Organic Pastures milk

In November 2011, a repeat outbreak occurred, this time infecting five children with E.coli 0157:H7. Three of these children developed HUS. Once again, interviews determined that the only common food consumed among the children came from Organic Pastures Dairy Company.

For those of you unfamiliar with the source of contamination, let me paint a graphic picture: cow feces are in the milk. Drinking contaminated raw milk, as happened to my son, can make you very ill and even cost you your life. Bottom line is that cows defecate in huge quantities without much consideration to their personal sanitation. Also consider the juxtaposition and proximity of a cow's anus and teats, coupled with the fact that they lounge in their own feces and defecate while being milked. Beginning to get the picture? Mistakes during and after the milking process do happen. That is why raw milk is considered a high risk food and why in 1924 "grade A pasteurization" became recommended federal policy. It is all about the feces.

So if raw milk is a high risk food, why would someone choose raw milk for their children? There are many moms, like myself, whose children suffer from ADD, autism, asthma, eczema, digestive disorders or food allergies. We struggle to find answers to help our children. According to the CDC, approximately 43 percent of children have some sort of chronic medical issue and that number does not include children who have cancer. Most parents will turn to their medical doctor for answers and if that doesn't work, some will hope to find a remedy through nutritional alternatives.

I assume most would agree that eating fewer processed foods and eating more whole foods is a sound nutritional path. Sadly, when reading about nutrition there is no

escaping information about the Standard American Diet (also referred to as SAD), which consists of processed foods filled with hydrogenated oils, high fructose corn syrup, refined white flour and sugar, artificial flavors and colors, MSG, and preservatives.

Our kids gorge on sodas, sugary cereals, French fries, potato chips, cookies, cakes and myriad fast food choices. Much of this food comes from a box, package or can and is loaded with chemicals few recognize or can pronounce.

Also, there are many different food crusades emerging across the nation: the Traditional Foods, Organic Foods, Locally Grown, Vegan and Food Freedom -- just to name a few. They all share the desire to escape eating mass-produced industrialized food and do not consider food from a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation, also known as a CAFOs, a healthy practice.

Milk produced by cows raised in CAFOs is considered by some health experts to be "sick milk." The cows are raised in horribly crowded conditions, they are fed genetically modified soy and corn along with low doses of antibiotics to keep them from becoming ill, and then they are injected with RBGH, a growth hormone, to coerce the cows into producing more milk. After this milk is harvested, it is ultra-pasteurized to kill loitering bacteria and homogenized to keep the fat from rising. The milk currently sitting on our grocery shelves is not the same milk that our grandparents and great-grandparents consumed. This milk is processed milk.

Would you eat raw poultry?

This leads to confusion. The act of heating milk to kill dangerous bacteria gets mixed into all the other information about how our modern day milk is produced. Does the pasteurization process alone, heating the milk, alter its nutritional benefits? We cook poultry, fish, meat, vegetables, and bake a variety of foods and they are still considered to be nutritious, unprocessed foods. Could you imagine eating a casserole or chicken that has not been cooked? The question, is does the simple act of heating milk render it processed?

The Weston A. Price Foundation thinks so. Dr. Weston Price was a dentist in the 1930s. He traveled the world studying traditional cultures. He found common variables in all traditional diets that promoted health, especially fats. He observed health consequences for those eating processed foods and a renewal of health when a traditional diet was re-introduced.

The Weston A. Price Foundation notes this distinction about milk: pasteurized milk is processed and raw milk is fresh, unprocessed, and when consumed in its natural state is full of life producing enzymes and probiotics. WAPF believes that the pasteurization process destroys the nutrients as well as alters the protein structure of the milk. Their mission is to have raw milk sales legal in all 50 states and they do not want the government regulating its production.

Misleading consumers to think raw milk is safe

WAPF also professes that cows fed all-grass diets cannot harbor pathogens and that raw milk possesses the inherent ability to kill pathogens. They believe that if you know your farmer and the milk is not produced by a CAFO, the milk is safe to drink. This misinformation regarding raw milk leads well-intentioned consumers to believe that raw milk is safe to drink.

WAPF is organized in every state and their goal is to encourage raw milk consumption. Their website lists a multitude of illnesses that supposedly can be cured simply by drinking fresh, unprocessed milk. Infants and children are specifically targeted for consumption of this enchanted elixir.

Unfortunately, this generation has lost touch with one important notion: why was pasteurization implemented in the first place? We are far removed from the horrors that occurred 100 years ago. Raw milk seems an easy solution to many physical ailments and it seems safe because few children are currently dying from its consumption. But I know the horror of the risk one takes when consuming raw milk, intimately. Had my son's face-off with raw milk happened even 30 years ago, he would have died. Modern medicine and machinery (ventilators, kidney dialysis, blood, plasma and platelet transfusions, antibiotics, narcotics, intravenous nutrition and surgeries)

ultimately saved his life.

So let's return to the original question: why would someone drink raw milk? For over a decade, the Weston A. Price Foundation has been proselytizing about the perceived health benefits of raw milk consumption, which also happens to coincide with times of economic hardship. Family farms are disappearing in an environment when you have a growing population becoming increasingly aware of the health costs of eating processed foods and they want to support their local farmer, which becomes the perfect marriage for raw milk production and consumption. Consumers are led to believe they are purchasing a healthier, unprocessed food and at the same time the feel good about economically supporting their local farmer. But like all marriages, they tend to lose their charm when someone becomes seriously ill. Since January of 2010, there have been 23 raw milk outbreaks with 300 illnesses.

Disseminating dangerous myths

The choice to give my son raw milk was tragic. And at the time, I didn't know there was a raw milk movement in the United States. This movement is led by the likes of: Sally Fallon Morrell, Dr. Ted Beals, Dr. Ron Schmid, and Mark McAfee, owner of Organic Pastures Dairy. This band of zealots would have you believe that the foundation of good health can only be found in a bottle of raw milk.

Sally Fallon Morrell is the president of the Weston A. Price Foundation. She owns a publishing company called New Trends Publishing, Inc. and has co-authored a book titled "Nourishing Traditions," which focuses on eating the traditional, unprocessed foods of our ancestors. She encourages pregnant women to consume raw milk, and heartily endorses feeding it to infants and children. Within the movement, she has received accolades for her raw milk infant formula.

Dr. Ted Beals, a retired pathologist, tries to use his credentials to give legitimacy to the movement. When state legislatures consider bills to legalize raw milk, Dr. Beals shows up as a witness. While he acknowledges that outbreaks caused by raw milk do occur, he says other foods have caused more illnesses. He does not believe raw milk is a high-risk food.

"The Untold Story of Milk," by Dr. Ron Schmid, regarded as the raw milk bible, was published by Sally Fallon Morrell. It presents an overview of the history of pasteurization and outlines all the reasons people should be drinking raw milk instead of pasteurized milk. Three dangerous myths are disseminated in this book: grass fed cows don't harbor pathogens, raw milk has innate properties that kill pathogens and if you know your farmer, the milk is safe.

Mark McAfee owns the largest raw milk dairy in the United States and is a super salesman for the raw milk movement. He is a dynamic speaker and a passionate educator about the perceived health benefits of raw milk. He hosts "Share the Secret" educational forums throughout California encouraging people to consume raw milk, and is commonly seen at raw milk rallies across the country. However, his sales pitch for raw milk fails to include information about the two raw milk outbreaks at his dairy, both involving acute E. coli 0157:H7 infections, resulting in 11 seriously ill children, five of whom experienced kidney failure.

And finally, there is my friend David Gumpert, host of The Complete Patient Blog and author of "The Raw Milk Revolution." His blog provides a forum for raw milk advocates, who believe in their constitutional right to food freedom, to voice their opinion. I refer to David and myself as bookends in the movement. He advocates for the family farmer's right to sell milk without pasteurizing it, and I advocate for the victims who have been injured by raw milk and try to warn future victims about the potentially serious health consequences they might encounter.

The Weston A. Price Foundation has chapters all across the country and says its numbers have grown dramatically in the past decade. Members believe in the philosophy of Weston A. Price, they eat according to the information provided in the book Nourishing Traditions and they believe the myths about raw milk written in the Untold Story of Milk. These growing chapters grind incessantly for the legalization of raw milk in states where it is currently illegal; in states where raw milk is legal, their aim is to relax existing regulations to their benefit. Sally Fallon, Ted Beals and Mark McAfee persistently advocate in state legislatures across the country regarding the perceived health benefits of raw milk.

Victimized again by falsehoods

My experience with these characters has been appalling. My son's near-death experience was hell to pay for my mistake, but I was not prepared for the second victimization. Rather than acknowledge the tremendous harm done in the first Organic Pastures outbreak, and then search for the reasons this happened to avoid future problems, they chose a different, rather slimy path to muddy the truth and deflect any culpability.

Their reaction was morbid. The lies began immediately about our son's case and some of these falsehoods could be found on the Weston A. Price Foundation website. I wrote to Sally Fallon requesting that she remove the distortions. Instead of honoring my appeal, she injected these pathetic fabrications into Ron Schmid's updated version of his book. This whole matter was very twisted and patently shows how they would hawk their souls to convince their followers that raw milk is always safe to drink.

People who choose raw milk for themselves or their families believe they are making an informed decision. They believe the benefits outweigh the risks. They have read the Schmid's book or literature endorsed by WAPF. However, a truly informed decision should also address the potential health consequences. Until both sides are presented and considered, any decision to consume raw milk is based on propaganda and ignorance.

I was ignorant and I have spoken to many others who have become ill or who have had children that became ill after consuming contaminated raw milk. Sadly, they all believed the risks were minimal, which brings me to bottom line: would any mother's choose raw milk for their children if they knew that it could seriously harm or even kill them? Never!

Consumers should understand the risks

With the abundance of literature about raw milk proselytizing its unproven benefits, how are consumers to learn about the dangers? When I purchased my raw milk it would have been nice to have some safety information to counteract the large poster in the store window advertising the alleged benefits. Perhaps a sign at the shelf where the milk sat would have helped me discern fact from fiction at Organic Pastures website. Warning labels are required on raw milk sold in California, but it is located in very small print on the back of the bottle. I never saw the warning message nor did I know to look for it.

In states where raw milk is sold in grocery stores, at farmers markets, or even on the farm, I would like to see this warning label in large, bold, conspicuous print:

Warning: Unpasteurized milk, also known as raw milk, is a raw agricultural product and may contain harmful bacteria (not limited to E. coli, Campylobacter, Listeria, and Salmonella) and can lead to serious injury and even death. Pregnant women, infants, children, the elderly, and persons with lowered resistance to disease (immune compromised) have higher risk for harm, which may include bloody diarrhea, vomiting, fever, dehydration, Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome, Guillian-Barre Syndrome, Reactive Arthritis, Irritable, Bowel Syndrome, miscarriage, or death.

Note: Raw Milk must be kept refrigerated at 40 degrees at all times.

This warning label would offset safety misinformation and give the unsuspecting consumer a fighting chance at becoming informed about the potential hazards lurking in raw milk.

No danger in removing dairy from diets

It has been nearly six years since I made the catastrophic decision to give my son raw milk. He would have been spared tremendous suffering had I simply followed my instincts to simply remove

all dairy from his diet instead of trying raw milk. As it turns out, when Chris consumes dairy products, the casein protein delivered to his blood stream works as an opiate on the brain. In other words, this protein works like a drug and causes Chris to become unfocused. His body has a negative reaction to both casein peptides and whey protein in milk. Once removed, his ability to focus greatly improved. He no longer needs a parent during homework and all morning congestion is gone. My son improved from the absence of store bought milk, not from the addition of raw milk.

A word of wisdom to other parents whose children may have a negative reaction to store bought pasteurized milk, whether allergies, asthma, autism, ADD, ear infections, eczema or digestive issues: try removing all dairy products and see if the symptoms improve. There is no risk in removing dairy products. The calcium and vitamins found in milk can easily be attained from other foods or supplements during your experiment.

One final thought about Sally Fallon: despite my believing she is completely irresponsible promoting the consumption of raw milk to infants and children, her cookbook "Nourishing Traditions" does have excellent information. This book is like having your grandmother in the kitchen passing down generations of food preparation wisdom. Food fermentation, both dairy and vegetable, is a focus for obtaining beneficial bacteria. Sally Fallon writes that people can obtain beneficial bacteria from kefir and yogurt made with pasteurized milk, so I'm not sure how or why the hyper-focus on raw milk emerged. So, if you are looking for a healthier way to eat, follow the suggestions in her book and just disregard everything you read about raw milk.

Don't profit from poisoning people

I would like to say something about supporting local dairy farmers. I have empathy for the plight of the small family farmer, but it can't come at the cost of harming people. Both raw milk farmers and consumers need to be educated about the risks of raw milk consumption. Poisoning people with raw milk is not going to economically help the local farmer. Feeding the cows grass and treating them humanely is not going to prevent cow feces from getting in the milk. If you want to support your local raw milk farmer, home pasteurization is one solution. People can learn how to pasteurize their own milk using a home pasteurizer or double boiler. If you suffer from lactose intolerance, take the digestive enzyme lactase. The perceived benefits of consuming raw milk will never outweigh the risk of harming yourself or your child.

And finally, my son still eats an organic, unprocessed diet without dairy products. In fact, no one in our family consumes dairy products. It was difficult making the switch, but well worth it. In the past year, no one in our family has been sick and Chris is hoping to receive a perfect attendance award at the end of the year. He is a happy, healthy teen who has yet to have a cavity, further evidence to never believe that the foundation of good health can only be found in a bottle of raw milk.

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DISCUSS

BB
04/11/2012

6:43AM

One of the best articles I've read in a while. The only milk we "need" is HUMAN breast milk as a young child and once we are weaned and move on to solids, there is no need for milk. The dairy council wants you to believe you can't survive without cow's milk. They have no respect or concern for animal welfare...they only care about making a profit and couldn't stay in business without pasteurization. I like some aspects of Weston A Price, but the notion that raw milk cures all illness is ridiculous. We don't need cow's milk...PERIOD! My son and daughter don't drink it and they're fine.

Gabrielle Meunier
04/11/2012
6:45AM

Hi Mary,

Excellent and well written article! As you know, in my first marriage, I lived on a family dairy farm for 13 years. And although my relatives were not super-educated, they did warn me when I inquired about drinking the milk before it was pasteurized. I had two children who grew up on the farm and I never fed them un-pasteurized milk because of the warning I receive from my brother-in-law that one day. He had never experienced knowing anyone that had an ill effect from drinking "raw" milk. He just had common sense. . .

Recently I was at a Farmer's Market outside of Boston. There was a cheese made out of "raw" milk. Most people would not notice that little detail at all. I warned my sister who lived there and told here not to buy that cheese. Mary, I agree with you that the FDA needs to mandate a label so that consumers can make an educated decision regarding raw milk and raw milk products.

Thanks for an amazing article!
Gabrielle

Anastasia @ Eco-Babyz
04/11/2012
7:12AM

I'm so sorry you had to go through that! Thank you for sharing your story. We did drink raw milk once from a local farm, but both my husband and I were almost as sensitive to it as the organic pasteurized milk (it shows on our skin with breakouts). We no longer drink milk at all, but we still buy organic yogurt, cheese, and butter. When my daughter was only 2 weeks old, she was diagnosed with milk protein intolerance after 3 painful days at the hospital. Since then we do not drink milk and it has been good for us, but we still eat cultured milk products. But I wanted to say that children die from food poisoning every day from all kinds of foods - raw milk, pasteurized milk, meat, lettuce, spinach. It's a risk for anyone who is alive. That does not mean we should ban food. Even growing your own food is risky since you never know what is in your soil. I think every person should have the right to choose what they eat, everyone should stop picking on raw milk, there are bigger problems than that. Thousands of children die everyday from not having access to clean water - maybe these resources would be better used elsewhere. I'm truly sorry for what you had to go through, but that might as well happen to us tomorrow by eating something else.

Ellen
04/11/2012
7:52AM

What a horrible experience for your family. This bacteria is terrifying.

But I do take exception to the vilification of small organic farms and even raw milk cheese. I think if you look at the statistical data and compare the numbers, nay even the proportions, of people who get these serious infections from cheese produced on small European dairy farms compared to the number of people infected by beef products produced in the USA, there is no doubt which kind of agriculture is the most dangerous. Not only have the big agribiz companies put us at risk when we eat the food they produce, they have also destroyed the effectiveness of antibiotic which has horrifying implications.

My own health issues are such that I have kept a close eye on food-borne illness issues for decades. The imperative of profits before people, before health, before community has become stronger and stronger. On the one hand, the big farm interests sneak additives into animal feeds even when they are illegal and otherwise try to obscure their activities. On the other hand, they use the banner of public safety to harass small producers.

I would not feed raw milk to a small child. But I would not ban it either. Just as I would not feed raw honey to a small child, but I don't believe there is any need to stop the sale of raw honey, nor do I have a problem with buying honey directly from a hobbyist beekeeper.

I believe consumers have a right to make their choices. And I think the data shows that you are more at risk eating prepared food at a restaurant or from a supermarket than you are drinking milk from a local farmer. Statistics seem pretty meaningless when you or a loved one become critically ill. But when making laws about public health, science and data and logic should guide us. Otherwise those who stand to make a profit will use our emotions to manipulate choices that do not truly serve the community.

And I have seen too many people make very poor decisions based on so-called common sense.

Jen
04/11/2012
10:12AM

Excellent article! I have scoured the Weston Price Foundation website, and read through the articles they site, but in many instances the conclusion stated in the article is completely different than the conclusion drawn by WPF. I think they twist things around just assuming that no one will take the time to read the scientific studies sited on their page.

Excellent point about removing dairy from your diet as well! Humans have no need for dairy products beyond infancy. That is why 75% of the world's population is lactose intolerant.. Europeans and North Americans have drank milk for generations and have "evolved" and passed on the ability to produce lactase in adulthood. There are plenty of sources of calcium & vitamin D other than dairy. Look at asian cultures who don't consume dairy products yet have extremely low incidence of osteoporosis; where Inuit eskimos consume the highest amount of calcium of any culture in the world, yet have the highest rate of osteoporosis.

Sorry for all you have had to go through. I really feel for you and your family. Take care and hope you can stay healthy &

happy!

Cheers

Audrey
04/11/2012
2:14PM

While my heart pours out for son and your family's suffering, I would like to clarify that all food raw, pasteurized, processed or packaged contain the risk of contamination. How many recalls have we witnessed in just the past few years? Maybe we need a large sign posted over every single food item in the store listing risks and warnings? Making raw milk a villain doesn't resolve anything especially when more people have been made sick from pasteurized products than fresh, local raw products. And yes, I do give raw milk to my children. My son was failing to thrive, constantly sick, with horrible ear infections and would never sleep. He had to be held all the time because he was so miserable. When I heard about raw milk, we tried it. He gained weight and made it on the charts when before he wasn't evenon them, he never had another ear infection, he has never had a serious cold or illness, he slept through the night within days of being switch, and was finally happy and content. So for every negative story there is a positive one. What treats and heals one person may potentially harm another person. Many of us want the right to choose and have access. People die from antibiotics all the time, but they aren't being banned, they are in fact being abused daily. Maybe doctors should scare patients with large signs listing all the risks. Of course if you choose not to use antibiotics and your child dies, children's services will take your other children away. Everything is a choice and every choice has a consequence.

Kissindra Schlepp
04/11/2012
3:21PM

I grew up on Raw Goat Milk and Im not dead, or sick or damaged from it. What happened to you was Unfortunate. And YES the culprits should have to Answer for it. Theres Bad Farmers out there, and this Can happen. But it Was Cows Milk... those are gross animals... I dont know why people want to drink Milk from a Cow anyway. Its harder to digest for humans and can Cause lactose issues. When I went Off Goats Milk, I developed Asthma, Cat and Dog Allergies as well as Seasonal allergies. But would you Rather consume or feed Pesticides, GMO, Antibiotics, and Unnatural Growth Hormones to Children? And dont even get me started on Soy and whole grain breads. Is it Better for children to start periods and get boobs at 6yrso? I Agree that there are Shady People and some Shady Business Practices out there, but that Is Not Everyone... Again tho, Im sorry you And your Son were hurt by someone elses Malpractice and Negligence... I think the Bigger side to this war has to do with the fact that they Dont Pasteurize milk in Factory Farms to 'Make it Safer' which is the Lie You're Buying Into here, but to Cover Up the fact that they run Dirty Disgusting Appalling Practices that make it a Have Too in the First Place. Id challenge you to Look Up Fluoroquinolone Antibiotic Use in Meat and Dairy from Factory Farms and its Secondary Poising of People. Heres Also a Link to their FaceBook Page where you can learn All About this Deadly Class Of Human and Animal Antibiotic.
https://www.facebook.com/FluoroquinoloneToxicity Id Rather Risk Ecoli thats Everywhere Anyways, then screw around with Processed Milk, Meat, or anything else. Besides, you Do realize you can kill your self with eating Raw Eggs

and Salmonella too right? those can Also carry Listeria and Ecoli. And driving cars, fast food, swimming in lakes & rivers, riding air planes... And dont let your kid play in the dirt, or touch cats or dogs, or their food. Oh yeah and dont let them go to school with all the whooping cough, flue, and colds and icky door knobs and OMG! heck just put them in a plastic bubble where everything can be Controlled Perfectly... oh no, and now theres West Nile and such too! oh my... The point is Nothing is w/o risk- but some are far More Acceptable then Others... ANd when it comes to Big Agg... Money is ALL they have in mind... You know you can Die from eating Raw Veggies too right? But id Bet you feed Those to your Son yes? Hype and Big Agg are the Best of pals you know. Id bet far More people have been Damaged by 'Purported Safe' Big Agg then the 12 cases you mentioned stemming from ONE Farm... ONE FARM... Most Organic Farms catch any contamination's of Any Sort Before it Ever reaches people. Big Agg on the other hand has no such testing OR recall Requirements. Perhaps you should Research Big Agg Practices Better before you try to Sell Real Farms as 100% evil.

Sandra
04/11/2012
7:11PM

Thank you for sharing. What a horrible experience for you and your family. I am glad that he was able to pull through and your story has a happy ending.

Even after hearing stories like yours I still choose to consume raw milk and give it to my children. I do not make this decision lightly. I have spent hundreds of hours researching this topic. I've looked at information from the CDC, USDA, our state's department of agriculture, and yes, the Weston A. Price Foundation and Organic Pasture Dairy. I have come to the conclusion that, for us, the benefits absolutely outweigh the risk. I know there is a chance that we will get sick from the milk we get from our local farm, but I have seen first-hand the positive impact it has had on the health of my family.

Everything in life carries some risk. If one is concerned with food borne illness they should also avoid pasteurized milk, orange juice, spinach, melons, strawberries, lunch meat, peanut butter, and god forbid ever eat out at a restaurant. All of these things have been associated with injury and/or death. As well as riding in a car, swimming in the ocean, or taking prescription medication. Of all the things we could choose to avoid, I find it hard to vilify something that has been a part of human culture for centuries before the advent of pasteurization.

Mary McGonigle-Martin
04/11/2012
8:19PM

Yes. Life is full of risks, but some risks are higher than others. Raw milk is a HIGH risk food, but the raw milk movement does not present it this way. That is the issue. It is a high risk food because cows/goats are milked twice a day 365 days a year. Sanitary procedures have to be followed perfectly each time the animal is milked. There is no room for error. This is humanly impossible that is why it is a high risk food. Sooner or later a pathogen from the poop will find its way into the milk.

For our children, we attempt to minimize life risks as much as possible. We have learned that head injures cause a life

time of challenges, so kids are required to wear helmets when riding their bikes or skateboards and razors. This reduces the risk of injury.

Another example is motorcycles. They are much higher risk vehicles than cars. If you drive a large car and your children wear seat belts, the injuries received if you were in an accident would be less than if you were riding a motorcycle with you child on the back; the risk for serious injury or death would be even higher if you and your child were not wearing helmets.

It is all about the perceived level of risk. Some people are comfortable with their teenagers driving motorcycles, others are not. Raw milk is the same. If you have been informed about the real risks of drinking raw milk (you can name all the pathogens and illnesses they can produce) and you are still comfortable giving your child raw milk, you have that right. Others hearing the same information may choose differently because they perceive the risk being too great.

Audrey, if you were informed that raw milk contaminated with campylobacter could cause paralysis and E.coli could cause kidney failure and Salmonella could cause arthritis and you were comfortable with that risk, it is your right as a parent to feed your child raw milk. But if you were only told all the positives about raw milk without being informed about the risks then you were not able to make an informed decision. Do you see the difference here?

I would also like to make it very clear that I support small family dairy farmers. They can produce milk from animals who have been fed an all-natural diet, including being pasture fed, without added hormones, antibiotics, etc. and still pasteurize the milk. This has to be an option for people. When a raw milk outbreak happens to a small family farmer, everyone loses.

Patrick Christell
04/11/2012
8:37PM

My heart goes out to Mrs. Martin, what she went through must have been terrible. That said, why post the article on a website dedicated to e. coli litigation? What Mrs. Martin neglects to mention is that the federal government (FDA, backed by the guns of state and local law enforcement, the lobbying dollars of Monsanto and a tertiary array of large agricultural concerns), are doing their level best to eradicate raw milk in America. Why? Because sales of the alternative are slipping at a rate of three percent per annum.

Anyone who knows anything about the state of food rights in this country understands that there are two sets of laws. One for the big guys, and the other for small producers. Last year, the Cargill corporation recalled sixty five million pounds of processed turkey. There were deaths involved. Was there an investigation? Arrests? Of course not. Industrial dairy practices are downright horrifying on every level. All it takes is the scantest amount of research to discover this.

The point? Statistically speaking, everything is a risk. Crossing the street is a risk. Drinking pastured raw milk is a risk, albeit statistically, much less of a risk than drinking milk that comes from high-density feedlots. The federal government's own research that they now choose to ignore supports this. In the current climate surrounding raw milk, agenda-driven articles like this become arrows in the

FDA/big dairy cabal's fear mongering campaign, and will undoubtedly be used to support pre-dawn raids on Amish farmers and other producers selling raw milk to a small communities that desperately want their product. The issue at hand is your ability to choose what you want to put in your body. The FDA does not believe you have a constitutional to do so (really, they don't). None of this can be ignored, especially in the face of a well-written ad-hoc appeal.

My Suburban Homestead
04/11/2012
9:38PM

Let's not forget that bacteria can and will colonize readily in milk ducts (mastitis). I myself have had MRSA in my own milk ducts six times! And I am a cleanly person, I shower every day, wear clothes, and do not lay in my own poo as my goats readily do. Bacteria is ubiquitous even in the most cleanly environment.

Sandra
04/11/2012
10:32PM

I suppose I am a risk-taker at heart :). I grew up around motorcycles, had one as a teenager, and would feel perfectly comfortable with my sons driving them when they are old enough - with proper training, of course.

Mrs. C.
04/12/2012
9:53AM

It was heartwrenching to read your story. I read a similar story of a mother who lost her child after he ate a hamburger at a famous fast food restaurant. In fact, more people are sickened annually and die from processed and fully cooked foods, as well as the recent outbreak from raw farm vegetables we have all heard about.
So what then do we do? Restaurants, Factory farmed foods, pastuerized ice creams, lettuce and spinach, tomatoes, toilets, ATM machines, grocery carts, door knobs, school buses, I could go on and on with the number of E Coli and pathogen-infested things that have made children and people sick and have casued deaths.

I am not saying that to minimize what you experienced but at some point we all get exposed to something that can potentially kill us. I nearly died from vaccine induced encephalitis after a routine vaccination. I was not prepared for that!
So, we can't live in constant fear and we can't live in a sterile environment. Hospitals are the worst places - MRSA is rampant!

You must minimize risk, for sure. I get that. Still, it cannot be avoided. My 3 year old sitting on a potty had his hands on the toilet for support and before I could react, he stuck his hands in his mouth! Yikes! He got sick from it too! I knew it was from the toilet and had to keep feeding him probiotics and try to keep liquids in him. It was a horrible and I just kept praying his immune system could overcome it. Nevertheless, kids touch stuff and get exposed to bad pathogens. We all do. I have gotten food poisoning so many times from various places that I have lost count.

It's easy to pick on raw milk. It is true it can be a risk if you have an unclean supplier. Still it is no more prevalent thanb other "approved" foods. Are we going to stop eating

vegetables, pastuerized peanut butter, food from restaurants and all the already pasteurized foods and fully cooked foods that STILL get us sick?

I don't think we can.

federal microbiologist
04/12/2012
11:19AM

Let's face it: no amount of arguments is going to dissuade raw milk fanatics from promoting their holy cause.

Raw milk fanatics are no different than the urine drinkers.

Indeed, the list of ailments that are supposedly cured by imbibing raw milk is very similar to the list of ailments 'cured' by urophagia:

http://www.shirleys-wellness-cafe.com/urine.htm

[Maybe one of these days Sally Fallon, Ted Beals, Scott McAfee, and Ronny Schmidt will hoist a glass or two of Their Own Nectar and let us know how it felt going down the gullet..... !]

What IS important is that an informed and knowledgeable citizenry acts to keep state legislatures from passing laws that legalize the sale of unpasteurized milk and dairy products.

So it's important to send letters and emails to state legislators telling them why it's a very, very bad idea to permit sales of unpasteurized milk. It's especially important to communicate this idea to legislative committee members, since they are the ones who decide whether a proposed bill to legalize the sale of raw milk will ever go up for a vote.

Victims of diseases caused by raw milk, like the McGonigle-Martin family, cannot be everywhere, all of the time, speaking to politicians about food safety. Advocates for food safety – and this includes readers of the Food Safety News blog - need to offer their assistance as well.

Tanya
04/12/2012
11:36AM

People who feed kids weird dangerous food should be shot. Poor kids become the subject of an experiment. They cannot opt out. Too bad if a kid is saddled with a whacky parent too addled to recognize when she's being hoaxed by internet quacks.

Lance Hill
04/12/2012
12:51PM

A very powerful article. Should be mandatory reading for all those considering introducing raw milk to their family diet. Thank you Mary for sharing your unfortunate experience. Hopefully it will challenge others to not make the same choice.

JoAnne
04/12/2012
4:09PM

All 5 of us were raised on a dairy farm in Northern Minnesota and drank raw milk from day 1. no sicknesses

here..I am 68 yrs old now and when I get a bone density test,doc says I have the bones of a 40 year old.....my whole family is very healthy and has been all these years...we attribute that to the raw milk....

Margaret
04/12/2012
5:49PM

JoAnne: What an interesting anecdote. All five of us (sisters) were raised in the suburbs far from any dairy and none of us has ever had raw milk. We range in age from 67 to 60, we have strong bones, no allergies, good blood pressure, all our teeth, take no prescription meds and have always been healthy. We attribute this to having never touched raw milk.

bemily
04/12/2012
7:45PM

I've never tried raw milk before, and I never intend to. This article just gives me one more reason to avoid it. I'm sorry to hear all you had to go through, but thank you for sharing your story so other people can learn from it!

MOST READ ON FSN

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Defiant McAfee Says Raw Milk Recall Will Be 'Short'

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