Real Life Stories

Several families who drank contaminated raw milk and experienced severe illness offered to share their stories on video to help raise awareness about the potential risks from raw milk. They describe why raw milk was appealing as a health food, and the unexpected consequences when they unfortunately purchased raw milk that contained dangerous bacteria.

Nicole Riggs

NICOLE RIGGS DEVELOPED AN ***E. COLI*** O157:H7 INFECTION IN MAY 2008. She was nine years old at the time. Nicole suffered from symptoms typical of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections – bloody diarrhea, cramping, and nausea – that quickly intensified and led to her hospitalization on May 8, 2008. Once hospitalized, Nicole developed renal failure, anemia, and thrombocytopenia (low platelet count) indicating that she was developing HUS. She was transferred to a Children's hospital and started on dialysis in order to save her life. She received dialysis for 18 days. Nicole's renal function slowly returned to the point that she was deemed healthy enough for discharge on June 1. After discharge, she remained under the care of a nephrologist. In addition, damage suffered during her HUS required that her gall bladder be removed. Medical costs associated with Nicole's *E. coli* infection and HUS exceed $180,000. As the result of damage to her kidneys suffered during her bout with HUS, Nicole is at significant risk for severe renal complications in the future.

The Missouri Department of Health final ***E. coli*** outbreak report is available here.

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Organism or Pathogen

Select an Organism

Vehicle (food or beverage)

Year

State

Select a State

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Larry Pedersen

LARRY PEDERSEN HAD JUST TURNED ONE YEAR OLD WHEN HE DEVELOPED AN ***E. COLI*** O157:H7 INFECTION IN MAY 2008. When his diarrhea turned bloody, his parents took him for medical treatment. He was admitted to the hospital on May 8. Shortly thereafter, Larry developed hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) and was transferred to a specialty care facility. As is typical of HUS, Larry was then suffering from acute renal failure. He was started on dialysis, which was necessary at that point for his survival. He required 15 days of dialysis before his kidneys recovered enough to function on their own. Larry was discharged on May 29, to continue recovery and treatment on an outpatient basis. The medical bills associated with his care approached $90,000. As the result of damage to his kidneys suffered during his bout with HUS, Larry is at significant risk for severe renal complications in the future. These complications include end stage renal disease (ESRD) and kidney transplant.

The Missouri Department of Health final ***E. coli*** outbreak report is available here.

Chris Martin

CHRIS MARTIN, THEN AGE SEVEN, DEVELOPED AN ***E. COLI*** O157:H7 INFECTION IN SEPTEMBER 2006 FOLLOWING CONSUMPTION OF RAW MILK. He was hospitalized beginning on September 8, suffering from severe gastrointestinal symptoms, including bloody diarrhea. Shortly thereafter, he developed hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). In an effort to properly treat his rapidly deteriorating condition, Chris was moved to multiple medical facilities, twice by life-flight. His HUS was remarkably severe, marked by prolonged renal failure, pancreatitis, and severe cardiac involvement. He required 18 days of renal replacement therapy. On two occasions his cardiac problems became so severe that he was placed on a ventilator. At several junctures, the possibility that he might not survive was very real.

Ultimately he was hospitalized through November 2, after incurring over $550,000 in medical bills. Renal experts have opined that Chris is likely to develop severe renal complications in the future. These complications include end stage renal disease (ESRD) and kidney transplant.

The final report on the raw milk ***E. coli*** outbreak Chris was a part of was written up in the July 13, 2008 Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Mari Tardiff

MARI TARDIFF BECAME ILL WITH A ***CAMPYLOBACTER*** INFECTION AFTER DRINKING RAW MILK IN 2008. As a result of her *Campylobacter* infection, Mari developed Guillain Barré syndrome, or GBS, a potentially fatal inflammatory disorder. GBS is an infrequent, but well-known risk of *Campylobacter* infection. By the time she was hospitalized in mid June, Mari was essentially paralyzed. On June 15, Mari was intubated and placed on mechanical ventilation. For weeks on end, Mari's condition remained unchanged. She was heavily sedated, unable to move, and entirely dependent on mechanical ventilation for survival. In August, there were indications of slight improvement, and the very slow process of weaning Mari off mechanical ventilation began. At the outset, it was not clear that the process was successful. Through incredible effort on Mari's part, she was fully weaned off mechanical ventilation by August 20, and discharged to a rehabilitation facility. She spent more than two months at the rehabilitation facility diligently attempting to re-acquire the ability to speak, breathe, and move her arms and legs on her own. She was discharged home on November 1, still in need of essentially 24-hour care. Since that time, she has worked every day toward achieving her goal, as yet unreached, of walking again. Medical expenses exceed $1,000,000.

The California Department of Public Health report on the ***Campylobacter*** outbreak among people who consumed unpasteurized milk, of which Mari was a part, was released in October, 2008.

Kalee Prue

KALEE PRUE, A 27-YEAR-OLD MOTHER OF ONE, BECAME INFECTED WITH ***E. COLI*** O157:NM IN JUNE 2008. Her symptoms began in early July, and intensified for several days. On two occasions, Kalee sought treatment in the emergency room. On July 12, it became apparent that she was developing hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). She was then admitted to the hospital on July 13. Kalee's renal failure was complete and prolonged, and she required plasmapharesis from July 13 through August 11. Severe anemia necessitated repeated transfusions with packed red blood cells as well. By the time she was released from the hospital on August 14, she had incurred over $230,000 in medical bills. Kalee has not recovered full renal function. She is at severe risk for long-term renal complications, including end stage renal disease (ESRD), dialysis, and transplant.

The Connecticut Department of Health final report on the 2008 ***E. coli*** outbreak Kalee's illness was associated with was published in December of 2008.

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