

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 7, 2025

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KEY POINTS FOR MEDIA:

- Raw milk is milk that has not been pasteurized (treated with heat to kill viruses, germs, and other pathogens)
- At least eleven people in Illinois have become ill recently after consuming raw milk
- Anyone can become ill from foodborne pathogens, but the very young, older people, and those with underlying health conditions are at greatest risk

IDPH Issues Reminder About Potential Hazards of Consuming Raw Milk

At least eleven recent illnesses linked to consumption of unpasteurized milk

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is issuing a general reminder to the public about the potential dangers of consuming raw milk after at least eleven people were recently sickened by such products. While most milk products sold in the state are pasteurized, meaning they have been treated with heat to kill viruses, germs, and other substances that can cause illness, raw milk is milk that has not been pasteurized, making it more likely to be a source of foodborne illness.

“Pasteurization is one of the greatest public health successes of the last century,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “It helps keep milk and dairy products safe for everyone to enjoy. Raw milk skips this important step and can carry dangerous germs that may cause serious illness, especially in young children, older people, and individuals with chronic medical conditions. To help keep everyone in Illinois safe, we encourage people to be cautious and think carefully before choosing to drink raw milk.”

IDPH has so far identified an outbreak of eleven cases of *Campylobacter* infection that appear to be linked to consumption of raw milk from a common source; the producer is taking steps to notify customers and is cooperating with the investigation. *Campylobacter* is a bacteria that can cause diarrhea (which can be bloody), fever, and stomach cramps. In more severe cases, the infection can lead to irritable bowel syndrome, arthritis, and Guillain-Barré syndrome. IDPH recommends that anyone who has consumed raw milk and begins to exhibit those symptoms to contact their medical provider.

Illinois raw milk rules require testing for temperature, antibiotics, and certain signs that could indicate infection within the product. However, specific pathogen testing for germs like *Campylobacter* or other disease-causing agents like *E. coli* or *salmonella* is not required.

IDPH recommends the following precautions to avoid illnesses associated with milk consumption:

- Use pasteurized milk and dairy products.

- Refrigerate perishable foods at 40°F or colder to slow bacterial growth. Never leave perishable food out for more than two hours -- or one hour if exposed to temperatures above 90°F, like in a hot car or at a picnic.
- Throw away expired or spoiled food. **When in doubt, throw it out.**

For more information on raw milk and its potential hazards, go to [Raw Milk and Your Health](#).

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