

News Release

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Contact information

Health officials investigating outbreak linked to raw milk

State health officials have linked eight cases of cryptosporidiosis and one case of *E. coli* O111:H8 illness to raw milk from a farm in Hillman, Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) urges anyone who may have recently purchased milk from Healthy Harvest Farm and Kitchen to discard the product and not consume it. The milk may be labeled natural A2 milk, and consumers may be unaware that the milk has not been pasteurized.

The illnesses have been caused by *Cryptosporidium parvum*, a parasite commonly found in cattle. The cases have related subtypes of *Cryptosporidium parvum*, suggesting a common source. All people who became ill with gastrointestinal symptoms in early August reported purchasing or consuming raw milk from Healthy Harvest Farm and Kitchen prior to the onset of their illness. Four of them are under the age of 10 and one has been hospitalized. One person was infected with *Cryptosporidium parvum* and *E. coli* O111:H8 at the same time. Being infected with multiple germs is not uncommon in raw milk outbreaks.

Raw or “natural” milk has not gone through the pasteurization process that heats the milk to a high temperature for a short period of time to kill harmful fecal germs that can contaminate raw milk. These germs can include *Cryptosporidium*, *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and other viruses, bacteria, and parasites, leading to the possibility of getting multiple infections from raw milk. Pasteurization is the only effective method for eliminating germs in raw milk and does not significantly change milk's nutritional value.

“Cattle can naturally carry *Cryptosporidium* and *E. coli* in their digestive system and shed these germs in their manure even though the animal is not sick. Contamination of the milk with manure can occur during the milking process, and if the milk is not pasteurized, the germs will not be killed,” said Carrie Klumb, senior epidemiologist in the Zoonotic Diseases Unit at MDH. “Consuming any unpasteurized milk, no matter how well the animals are cared for and how clean the operation is, puts people at risk for getting sick.”

People infected with *Cryptosporidium* generally develop watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, loss of appetite and weight loss approximately a week after consuming contaminated foods or touching infected animals. The illness typically lasts for two weeks but symptoms may go in cycles in which people seem to get better for a few days and then feel worse again before the illness ends.

Symptoms of *E. coli* infections typically include stomach cramps and diarrhea, including bloody diarrhea. People typically become ill two to five days after consuming contaminated food. In some cases, people may develop severe illness that leads to hospitalization. Children under the age of 5 years old, adults over the age of 65 years old and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk.

MDH is working to identify all people who may have purchased milk from Healthy Harvest Farm and Kitchen to inform them of the risk to prevent additional illnesses. If you or someone you know has experienced gastrointestinal illness after consuming unpasteurized milk from Healthy Harvest Farm and Kitchen, please fill out a [confidential online survey](#) or email health.zdu@state.mn.us. If you are currently sick, please reach out to your health care provider.

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