

A healthful and supportive environment where all people of Johnson County can achieve optimal physical, mental, and social well-being.



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Johnson County Board of Health Policy Statement On the Sale of Raw Milk in Iowa

The Johnson County Board of Health (JCBOH) has reviewed and discussed the relevant facts on the issue of raw milk sales in Iowa. Subsequent to that review and discussion, the JCBOH unanimously adopted the position which supports the current ban on the sale of raw milk for public consumption. It is the Board's conclusion that the science supports the current practice as sound public health policy which protects and preserves the health of Iowans. While the research and scientific evidence is extensive, the reasons for the JCBOH's statement may be summarized in the following areas: 1) Raw milk poses an inherently elevated risk of disease outbreaks and illnesses due to the variety of pathogens likely to be present in it; 2) the nutritional value of pasteurized milk is essentially identical to that of raw milk; and 3) the claims of protective health properties of raw milk versus pasteurized milk are unfounded.

Raw milk can contain a variety of disease-causing pathogens, as demonstrated by numerous scientific studies. Raw milk can host various human pathogens, including *E. coli* O157:H7, *Salmonella*, *Streptococcus spp.*, *Yersinia enterocolitica*, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, and *Coxiella burnetti* to name a few. Even under ideal hygienic conditions for the collection and packaging of raw milk, the probability of contamination is high. These disease agents are capable of causing severe and even life-threatening illness in humans, particularly the very young, the old, pregnant women, and those with compromised immune systems. While raw milk represents less than 1% of all milk consumed in the US, it is responsible for virtually all milk-related disease outbreaks.

Pasteurization does not significantly degrade the nutritional quality of milk. Extensive research has shown that those nutrients which provide substantive value in raw milk, are present to the same degree in pasteurized milk including vitamin, mineral and protein constituents. Careful consideration must be given to all of the science related to nutrition and when evaluating research related to raw and pasteurized milk. Information should not be "cherry picked" fragments of research such as has been seen by raw milk proponents.

Lastly, the health claims of raw milk vs. pasteurized milk have no basis in science. Claims that immunological, allergic and structural advantages of raw milk that are removed during pasteurization are unfounded. In fact, those protective claims of raw milk are not supported by the science so any comparison to pasteurized milk is futile. There is no reputable science to support the claims that raw milk cures lactose intolerance, asthma or allergies or that it is more effective at preventing osteoporosis or building immune systems.

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The nutritional content of pasteurized milk can be an important part of a well-balanced diet. Raw milk presents no nutritional advantage over pasteurized milk and in fact presents significant potential health risks due to its propensity to harbor and transmit harmful pathogens. These pathogens present elevated risks to children, the elderly, pregnant women and persons with compromised immune systems. Therefore, the JCBOH supports current law which prohibits the sale of raw milk for public consumption. We find this to be sound public policy.

Adopted: February 22, 2012

Reviewed and Approved: December 13, 2017