

Dairy Myths vs. Dairy Truths

Farming & Cow Care



Myth

Milk contains antibiotics.

Truth

At the farm and the processing plant, milk is tested for the most commonly used antibiotics. Any milk that tests positive cannot be sold to the public. The most recent report by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration affirms that there are NO antibiotics found in milk heading to retail. Both organic and conventional dairy farmers treat ill cows under the close supervision of a veterinarian.

- On a conventional farm, the cow is taken from the milking herd for treatment, and not returned to the herd until her milk tests free of antibiotics.
- On an organic farm, the cow is permanently removed from the herd.

Myth

There are harmful hormones in milk.

Truth

Hormones are naturally present in all foods, whether plant or animal, and are broken down during digestion. Both conventional and organic milk naturally contain trace amounts of hormones – an extremely low amount relative to the amount our bodies naturally produce.

Bovine somatotropin (bST) is a protein hormone that cows naturally produce to grow as calves and make milk as adults. Scientists have synthesized a copy of bST called recombinant bovine somatotropin (rbST), which some dairy farmers choose to give to cows to boost milk production. rbST is never added directly to milk.

- Health authorities such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have determined that milk from cows treated with rbST is both nutritious and safe.
- Research indicates the hormone levels in milk are the same whether or not cows are given rbST.¹



Myth

Milk causes early puberty.

Truth

Some studies suggest puberty has been skewing younger over several decades,² but children's dairy milk consumption has declined over the same period.³ The potential causes and long-term effects of early puberty remain unclear, but recent studies suggest it may be linked with higher body weight.⁴



Myth

Dairy cows are mistreated.

Truth

Dairy farmers' commitment to providing high-quality milk begins with taking good care of their cows.

- Dairy cows have balanced, nutritious diets designed by professional nutritionists.
- Dairy cows have access to clean water all day.
- Dairy cows receive preventive veterinary care and prompt treatment when they're ill.
- Many dairy cows live in freestall barns that protect them from the weather while allowing them to walk around, eat, drink and sleep whenever they choose.

Myth

Pasteurization destroys the nutrients in milk.

Truth

Pasteurized milk offers the same health benefits as raw milk, without the risks.

- A small amount of vitamin C is lost during pasteurization; however, milk is not a good source of vitamin C to begin with.
- Harmful bacterial are destroyed during pasteurization, but dairy products like yogurt or kefir can provide good bacteria; fermented from pasteurized milk, they provide live and active cultures without the risk of foodborne illness.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommend that no one consume raw milk.

References: 1. Vicini J. et al. Survey of retail milk composition as affected by label claims regarding farmmanagement practice. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2008;108:1198-1203 2. Walvoord, E.C. The timing of puberty: Is it changing? Does it matter? *J. Adol. Health* 47: 433-439, 2010. 3. Sebastian, R.S., J.D. Goldman, C. Wilkinson Enns, et al. Fluid Milk Consumption in the United States: What We Eat In America, NHANES 2005-2006. Food Surveys Research Group Dietary Data Brief No. 3, September 2010. Available from: http://ars.usda.gov/SP2UserFiles/Place/12355000/pdf/DBrief/3_milk_consumption_0506.pdf. Accessed October 19, 2017. 4. Kaplowitz, P.B. Link between body fat and the timing of puberty. *Pediatrics* 121: 208s-217s, 2008.



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