got raw milk?

Nature’s perfect food? Or public enemy number one? Here’s why a growing number of families are turning to raw milk, despite the hype.

by Marygrace Taylor
"I notice most [kids] get chronic ear infections, and kids don’t have any of that, and I think it’s at least in part due to the fact that they drink raw milk."
formula made with raw milk for babies who can’t be breastfed. “Many of our kids are thriving on raw milk,” says Lindy Woodard, M.D. of Pediatric Alternatives. “Some of them had allergies that got better after drinking it, and some were considered lactose intolerant on pasteurized milk.”

This past spring, 10 Californians developed infections from the bacteria campylobacter that were traced back to raw cream (raw milk and raw milk products were also recalled, though no one was hospitalized and there were no deaths). While Woodard is troubled by the outbreak, she still recommends raw milk because she believes it’s a nutritious food, but also reminds parents that consuming raw milk can come with a risk and to watch for any signs of fever or diarrhea after they or their kids consume it. “Some of our families are committed to whole, unadulterated foods—they know their farmers and feel consuming raw milk is worth the risk. Others can’t imagine why they would take any risk at all,” Woodard says. With both sides of the raw milk debate in gridlock, the decision is left up to individual families: “Drinking raw milk is a personal choice,” says Reitzig. “If you look into it and decide that it’s for you or that it isn’t, that’s fine. Parents are smart enough to make that choice.”

**where can you get raw milk?**

Drinking raw milk is legal in all 50 states, but that doesn’t always mean it’s easy to buy. Consumers can buy raw milk from stores in states like California and Pennsylvania, but in states like Texas and New York, the milk has to be purchased on the farm where it’s produced. Since interstate sales of raw milk are illegal, residents of states that don’t allow the sale of raw milk—like Wisconsin or New Jersey—often turn to herd shares. In a herd share, consumers buy a share of a dairy cow from a farmer (the money goes toward housing the cow, caring for it, and milking it) and in exchange receive some of the cow’s milk (learn about your state’s law at farmtoconsumer.org/raw_milk_map.htm). Since herd share members are technically part-owners of the cows themselves, they also own the cow’s milk, and therefore don’t have to buy it.