

Importance of packaged (uht pasteurized) milk in comparison to loose milk

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Milk is considered to be one of the basic commodities and a comprehensive source of nutrition in one's day-to-day life as it has all the essential nutrients that are needed in a well-balanced diet. But the nonstop perplexity between choosing packaged milk or loose milk has been for years if not decades.

There are numerous arguments on whether the people should drink packaged milk (UHT pasteurized) or opt for loose milk, commonly known as khula doodh.

Pakistan is among the top milk producing countries in the world with an annual production of 37-38 billion litres approx out of which 90 to 95% of the population still prefer loose milk over packaged milk. The main reason behind this is that people are still not aware of the benefits of packaged milk or UHT technology. Many are still going for loose milk as it has been going on for generations and now it has become a part of their tradition while others just consider it too expensive. People have categorized packaged milk as the milk that not everyone can afford, these people then opt for khula doodh, and then there are those who can easily buy it. The processing and packaging of packaged milk apparently add to its cost which makes it expensive as compared to loose milk and difficult for consumers to buy it. But this often should not be the case as they need to understand that with a little additional cost they are entitled to safe, healthy and pure milk (free from bacteria) which is not possible with loose milk. In terms of safety standards, can't people trust a leading brand over local doodhwalas?

Loose milk is collected fresh from the animals without any further processing or testing and is thus full of bacteria. The local milk sellers then tamper it

with unfiltered water and store it in a plastic bag which is again unhygienic and full of microbial. People consuming such milk are not getting the proper nutrients required for their body which result in malnutrition. A recent health ministry report shows an increase of 12 to 13% in malnutrition in the last year. According to a research by the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), loose milk is more likely to cause foodborne illness as the bacteria present in it can be of serious danger to older adults, people with weak immune systems, pregnant women and children. In simpler words, loose milk is fatal for the health as it can cause severe infections such as Salmonella, E. coli and Listeria. A CDC survey also showed 127 outbreaks linked to loose milk with 1, 909 illnesses and 144 hospitalisations from 1993 to 2012. This is one of the main reasons why packaged milk is preferred over loose milk.

In countries like France, Germany, Spain, Norway, Sweden and the US, malnutrition and other health issues are very rare. Also, life expectancy is much higher as compared to Pakistan where people cherish when they cross 60. Most states have even imposed a strict ban on the selling and distribution of loose milk. The leading brands of packaged milk in Pakistan are producing milk with either UHT technology or pasteurization.

Many people still believe that pasteurization harms the milk but there are proven facts about such common myths. Firstly, treating the milk does not mean that it can be kept out of the refrigerator for too long after it had been opened. Secondly, packaged milk does not cause lactose intolerance and allergic reactions, provided that the person is not sensitive to milk protein.

Thirdly, it is free from bacteria which ultimately save lives. Plus, the extra protein in packaged milk is very helpful for weightlifters and bodybuilders. People are also of the misconception that during the process of UHT, all the nutrients vanish but it is not so. During the process, the milk is heated at a particular temperature for a short time while preserving the quality and nutritious of the milk in its original form. The process also kills all the harmful bacteria responsible for diseases like typhoid fever, Q fever, listeriosis, brucellosis, tuberculosis and diphtheria. The Food Development Authority (FDA) also stated that pasteurization and UHT do not reduce the nutritional value of milk.

Milk processors in Pakistan need to deliver some strong marketing techniques in order to convince costumers that packaged milk is really the safest of all. They should strengthen their value proposition.

Milk matters but one should also be well aware whether the milk is really safe? For that, always read the label and search for the word 'pasteurized' on it. If it's not there, the product might contain loose milk. When buying milk products from refrigerators, never hesitate to ask the grocer whether the milk is pasteurized or not? Avoid buying milk from local stands and never comprise on the word 'pasteurized'. Choose packaged milk over loose milk and lead a healthy and nutritious life.