

CDC keeps warning people not to eat raw cookie dough

By Lindsey Bever, Washington Post on 12.17.18

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is warning people not to eat cookie dough, a temptation at holiday time. Photo: Goran Kosanovic for The Washington Post

The Christmas cookies are in the oven, the mixing bowl, which is still coated with the sugary sweet dough, is calling your name.

Don't listen to it, health experts warn.

With holiday baking season underway, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is once again urging people not to eat unbaked cookie dough – not even a tiny taste – because "unbaked products that are intended to be cooked, such as dough or batter, can make you sick."

"Say No to Raw Dough!" the CDC warns.

The potential problem is with two primary ingredients.

Raw flour can be contaminated with *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), and raw eggs have been a known carrier of salmonella bacteria.

Both bacteria are killed in the cooking process, but contaminated food that is not cooked or is undercooked has been known to make people ill, according to the CDC.

"When you're making cookies, often the recipe calls for raw eggs," Lindsay Malone, a registered dietitian with the Cleveland Clinic, said in 2016. "Whenever you consume raw eggs, you increase your risk of salmonella poisoning." Malone added that "when there's a risk for salmonella, you really want to be cautious and take steps to avoid it as much as possible."

In recent years, public health experts have become vocal about raw flour, too.

The CDC reported that in 2016, more than 60 people across the United States were sickened with *E. coli* from raw flour.

According to an alert from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that means no taste-testing batter or dough – not for cookies, cakes, pies or even bread and pizza crust.

In addition, the CDC said, children should not be permitted to play with dough because they can get sick simply from handling it.

The health agency sounds the alarm about eating raw cookie dough every year around this time, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection typically echoes the CDC.

However, not all public health experts agree that raw cookie dough is dangerous.

Brian Zikmund-Fisher, associate professor of Health Behavior and Health Education at University of Michigan, wrote in the *Conversation* in 2016 that his family eats raw cookie dough "regularly."

"To start, when most people think about health risks and cookie dough, they think about raw egg. Eggs can be contaminated with salmonella bacteria, and food safety recommendations encourage people to cook eggs until the white and yolk are firm in order to kill any bacteria," Zikmund-Fisher wrote. "Because of this concern, when my kids and I make cookie dough, we never use regular eggs. Instead, we use eggs that have been pasteurized to kill any harmful bacteria without actually cooking the egg itself. (A great public health innovation, if you ask me!) So, I wasn't worried about the eggs in the cookie dough."

On raw flour, he said that contamination is "rare."

Symptoms from *E. coli* infection typically appear within several days and may include severe stomach pain, diarrhea and vomiting. Symptoms of a salmonella infection are similar but may also include a fever, according to the CDC. With both illnesses, patients usually recover within less than a week, according to the agency.

To avoid potential infection, the CDC suggests not eating raw cookie dough or cake batter, of course, but also not making homemade ice cream or milkshakes with the uncooked ingredients. (However, according to the FDA, commercial cookie dough ice cream is typically safe because it is made with treated flour and pasteurized eggs.) The CDC also urges people to thoroughly wash their hands with warm, soapy water and to clean all work surfaces, dishes and utensils when working with raw eggs and flour.

Quiz

1 Read the following CENTRAL idea statements.

1. *The CDC warns that children should not be allowed to play with raw cookie dough because touching it can make them sick.*
2. *The CDC has once again urged Americans to avoid the health risks inherent in eating raw cookie dough.*
3. *There are those who oppose the CDC's warning about cookie dough, arguing that there are safe ways to prepare raw cookie dough.*
4. *There are those who are becoming increasingly concerned about the effects of eating raw flour.*

Which two statements accurately reflect the CENTRAL ideas of the article?

- (A) 1 and 3
- (B) 1 and 4
- (C) 2 and 3
- (D) 2 and 4

- 2 Read the following two details from the article.

Raw flour can be contaminated with Escherichia coli (E. coli), and raw eggs have been a known carrier of salmonella bacteria.

Symptoms from E. coli infection typically appear within several days and may include severe stomach pain, diarrhea and vomiting. Symptoms of a salmonella infection are similar but may also include a fever, according to the CDC.

Select the answer choice that BEST explains how these details develop a central idea of the article.

- (A) Both details demonstrate that raw eggs pose a greater threat to public health than raw flour.
- (B) Both details present conflicting viewpoints about the real threat that eating raw cookie dough can pose.
- (C) Both details support the idea that the health risks associated with eating raw cookie dough are unfounded.
- (D) Both details contribute to an understanding of why the CDC has deemed raw cookie dough hazardous to eat.

- 3 Read the following quote from the article.

"Because of this concern, when my kids and I make cookie dough, we never use regular eggs. Instead, we use eggs that have been pasteurized to kill any harmful bacteria without actually cooking the egg itself. (A great public health innovation, if you ask me!) So, I wasn't worried about the eggs in the cookie dough."

How does this quote contribute to the effectiveness of the article?

- (A) It explains one health expert's rationale for disagreeing with the CDC's assessment of raw cookie dough.
- (B) It demonstrates why one health expert thinks that the benefits of eating raw cookie dough outweigh the hazards.
- (C) It shows that one health expert thinks that most Americans do not make safe choices regarding cookie dough.
- (D) It highlights how one expert believes that raw cookie dough can be far more dangerous than it appears.

- 4 Read the following sentence from the article.

The CDC reported that in 2016, more than 60 people across the United States were sickened with E. coli from raw flour.

How does this sentence contribute to the logos of the article?

- (A) This sentence contributes to the logos of the article by demonstrating that the CDC is the foremost health agency in the United States.
- (B) This sentence contributes to the logos of the article by instilling fear regarding the prevalence of E. coli in the United States.
- (C) This sentence contributes to the logos of the article by providing a numerical figure that demonstrates the danger of raw cookie dough.
- (D) This sentence contributes to the logos of the article by demonstrating the problem with raw cookie dough in a thoughtful way.

Answer Key

1 Read the following CENTRAL idea statements.

- 1. The CDC warns that children should not be allowed to play with raw cookie dough because touching it can make them sick.*
- 2. The CDC has once again urged Americans to avoid the health risks inherent in eating raw cookie dough.*
- 3. There are those who oppose the CDC's warning about cookie dough, arguing that there are safe ways to prepare raw cookie dough.*
- 4. There are those who are becoming increasingly concerned about the effects of eating raw flour.*

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