

# Daily Mail



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2007

www.dailymail.co.uk

45p

## Milk bug 'stops our bodies from fighting off Crohn's disease'

By **Sean Poulter**  
Consumer Affairs Editor

A LINK between a bug found in some fresh milk and Crohn's disease has been established by breakthrough research published yesterday.

The discovery could bring demands to change milk production methods - perhaps following the common European practice of Ultra Heat Treatment (UHT).

It could also provide the key to antibiotic treatments for the condition, which affects approximately 150,000 Britons.

Doctors have long claimed that a bug called Mycobacterium paratuberculosis (MAP), which is found in cattle and some milk, causes Crohn's.

But the dairy industry has never accepted the link and researchers had failed to prove a connection.

Now scientists at Liverpool University have identified how MAP weakens the body's defence mechanism and so allows other harmful bugs, specifically e.coli, to thrive.

This e.coli, which is known to be present within Crohn's disease tissue in increased amounts, is believed to cause inflammation and sickness.

Crohn's leads to chronic intestinal inflammation; pain, bleeding and diarrhoea. It is a particularly distressing condition among children.

Professor Jon Rhodes, whose work was published in the journal Gastroenterology, said: 'MAP has been found within Crohn's disease tissue but there has been much controversy concerning its role in the disease.'

He added that MAP releases a com-

plex molecule which prevents white blood cells from killing e.coli. Professor John Hermon-Taylor, Britain's leading expert on Crohn's, called for a mass vaccination of cattle against becoming infected with MAP in the first place.

He said ultra heat treatment of milk might kill the infection but it would not be a guarantee.

The Dairy Council, which speaks for milk producers, said a number of studies had failed to show a causal link between MAP in milk and Crohn's.

Its director, Dr Judith Bryans, said: 'While the findings of the study are interesting, it is important to stress that not all Crohn's patients have MAP in their intestines. This would suggest that there are additional factors which may cause Crohn's disease.'

She added: 'There is no need for anyone to alter their consumption of milk based on current scientific knowledge.'

s.poulter@dailymail.co.uk

RESEARCH in 2000 found that 2.1 per cent of pasteurised milk taken from eight dairies across Britain contained MAP. With more than 10 billion pints of milk drunk every year - that equates to 575,342 tainted pints a day. There are 5,000 new cases of Crohn's a year. Ninety per cent of sufferers will need surgery at some stage to tackle the serious bowel complications it causes. Stress is thought to exacerbate the illness. Sufferers include television voice-coach Carrie Grant, actor Ken Stott and singer Beth Orton.