



'Staph aureus can be present at high levels in unpasteurised milk.'

The main source of contamination in foods is humans, in particular food handlers who carry the bacterium on their hands or in their nostrils. The risk of transmission increases if food handlers have infected wounds or skin infections on their hands or arms, or if they have an infection which causes them to cough or sneeze.

Other routes of contamination include raw materials such as milk or cheese, or contaminated food preparation surfaces.

How does Staph aureus cause food poisoning?

Once Staph aureus has contaminated food, given the opportunity it will grow and produce a toxin (poison) in the food. It is this toxin, rather than the bacterium itself, which makes you ill. That is why you can become ill so quickly after eating food contaminated with Staph aureus - as soon as the toxin reaches your stomach it causes vomiting.