

E. coli are bacteria that live in the bowels (intestines) of people and animals. There are many types of *E. coli* that cause mild illness. However, *E. coli* 0157:H7 can cause severe illness.

SYMPTOMS

- Diarrhea (often bloody)
- Low or no fever
- Stomach cramps
- Vomiting (sometimes)

Symptoms of *E. coli* 0157:H7 usually start within 3 to 8 days after being infected. You may still be able to spread the *E. coli* 0157:H7 for 2-3 weeks after you feel better. Be sure to wash your hands carefully after going to the bathroom. People can lose a lot of fluids through vomiting and diarrhea which can lead to dehydration (not enough fluid in the body).

Dehydration is serious and may need special medical care. Dehydration is usually more of a problem for young children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems. Anytime you have vomiting or diarrhea, you should be sure to replace the fluids you lose. You can do this by drinking plenty of water, making a drink that is half water and half juice or soda (without caffeine) or using an oral rehydration fluid. Oral rehydration fluid is a prepackaged mixture of salts and sugar mixed with water that replaces lost minerals.

TREATMENT

People with *E. coli* 0157:H7 usually get better within a week without treatment. Treating with antibiotics may actually make illness worse. Antibiotics should not be used.

HOW IT'S SPREAD

You can get *E. coli* 0157:H7:

- By eating raw or undercooked meats.
- By drinking raw (unpasteurized) milk or juice or eating cheese made from raw milk.
- By drinking untreated water.
- By eating fruits or vegetables which have been contaminated with raw sewage.
- From poor handwashing. A person with *E. coli* 0157:H7 can shed the bacteria in their stool. They can infect others if they don't wash their hands well after using the bathroom.

HOW TO PREVENT *E. COLI*—READ THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS PAGE

Food Safety

- Cook meats thoroughly, especially ground meat. Use a food thermometer to make sure meat is done. Do not eat hamburger that is still pink.
- Keep raw meats away from ready to eat foods. Never return cooked meat to the unwashed dish that held raw meat.
- Wash hands, cutting boards, countertops, and utensils well after touching raw meat and poultry.
- Use a separate cutting board for meats and poultry, different from foods you will eat raw. The best cutting boards are easy to clean and do not absorb liquid.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables well.
- Do not use unpasteurized (raw) milk or cheese from cows or goats or raw juice.
- Drink only treated water. Do not swallow swimming pool or lake water.
- Sick people should not make food for others.

Handwashing

Wash hands often, especially if you are sick. People caring for anyone with diarrhea or vomiting should wash their hands well, especially before making food, after changing diapers, helping a sick person use the bathroom, handling soiled laundry or cleaning soiled areas.

MORE ABOUT HANDWASHING

How to Wash



1. Wet



2. Soap



3. Scrub 15 –20 seconds



4. Rinse



5. Dry



6. Use towel to turn off faucet

WHEN TO WASH

- Before and after eating
- Before, during and after making and touching food
- After using the bathroom or helping a child use the bathroom
- After changing or checking a diaper
- After coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose and after wiping a child's nose
- After touching blood or body fluids (urine, feces, vomit, etc)
- After touching animals or their waste
- After touching trash
- After touching money
- Whenever hands look, feel or smell dirty

Washing hands is the best way to prevent the spread of many illnesses. No soap and water? Use a hand sanitizer made with alcohol (follow package directions) – then wash with soap and water as soon as you can.