

How Can E.Coli 0157:H7 Infection be Prevented ?

It is important not to allow raw meat and poultry, or their juices, come into contact with other meat or vegetables.

- Keep perishable foods refrigerated (less than 5°C).
- Never leave raw meats at room temperature.
- Correct cooking kills the bacteria.
- Minced meat must be cooked until the meat is brown throughout and juices run clear.
- Drink water from a safe source such as treated tap water.
- Always wash raw fruit and vegetables with safe water before eating.
- Do not drink unpasteurised milk.
- Do not use public swimming pool if your child has diarrhoea.
- Do not send your child to crèche or school if they have vomiting and/or diarrhoea.

- Healthcare workers, childcare staff and food handlers should be advised by Public health when they can return to work.

Always remember:

Wash hands thoroughly with liquid soap and warm water:

- ★ Before and after preparing food.
- ★ After handling raw meats and chicken.
- ★ After using the toilet and make sure children do the same.
- ★ After changing a baby's nappy.
- ★ After contact with animals.



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Version: 1

Approval Date: June 2016

Review Date: June 2018

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E Coli 0157:H7

Information for Patients, Parents and Carers

Infection Prevention and Control Team

Main Hospital Number

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E.Coli 0157:H7 belong to a large group of bacteria called Escheria Coli (or E Coli for short). Many E.Coli are harmless and are normally found in the gut, but some such as E Coli 0157:H7 can cause disease in humans.

Spread

E.Coli lives in the intestines of cattle and sheep without causing any illness in the animal.

E.Coli can cause serious illness in adults and children if it survives on meat that is not cooked fully or on food that has been contaminated by animal faeces.

The most common way it is spread is through undercooked mince meat, such as hamburgers. It may also be spread through contaminated raw vegetables or unpasteurised milk, untreated water from private wells' and even by direct contact with animals. It may spread from person to person especially in childcare centres, creches, nursing homes and hospitals.

The incubation period (the time between becoming infected and becoming unwell) is usually 2-4 days. However, the incubation period may range from as little as 1 day to as much as 10 days. The illness may last for a couple of weeks.

What are the Symptoms ?

Most children will have abdominal / tummy pain, cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea (sometimes blood may be present) and may have a fever.

Can EColi Have Serious Side Effects ?

Children under 5 years of age and the elderly are most at risk. Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS) is a complication of this disease which can cause kidney problems in children. When a child no longer has diarrhoea they must be monitored for signs of HUS for the following couple of weeks.

Signs of HUS include:

- Diarrhoea
- Irritability
- Generalised Weakness, Fatigue
- Pale
- Bruising easy
- Skin rash with small red spots
- Passing little or no urine
- Seizures- Rare.

How Long Will My Child Have the Illness ?

A child with the illness can easily spread the bacteria to others because bacteria can remain in their bowel movements (poo) from 1 week to a number of months. For this reason it is important that the person changing a baby's nappy wash their hands very carefully when they are finished.

Older children must wash their hands carefully after using the toilet.

Nurseries and child care centres must make sure staff follow strict hand washing to prevent the infection from passing to themselves or other children

What is the Treatment ?

Children should be seen by a doctor if they have the symptoms, some children may need treatment in hospital to prevent dehydration.

