



Fact Sheet: E. coli

What is E. coli?

E. coli are bacteria that normally live in the intestines of humans and animals. There are many strains of *E. coli* bacteria. Most of them are harmless. However, one particular strain, *E. coli* 0157:H7, may cause serious illness in people.

What are the symptoms?

- Diarrhea (which often becomes bloody)
- Stomach cramps
- Slight fever (often no fever)

Symptoms appear from 2 to 8 days after exposure, usually 3 to 4 days.

How is it spread?

E. coli can be spread from cattle to people through eating raw or undercooked beef (especially ground beef) or by consuming food or water contaminated by cattle feces. Infected individuals may spread the illness to others by not washing their hands well after a bowel movement.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider or 257-3612.

How is it treated?

If you think you have been exposed, call your doctor immediately for a stool sample test and treatment recommendations. As with any diarrhea, it is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration (such as fruit juice and water).

If you are a food service worker, a health care worker, or a childcare worker: report your illness to your supervisor and do not work until your illness is over and your medical provider says it is OK to return to work.

How is it prevented?

- Fully cook all ground beef products to 160 degrees Fahrenheit (use a thermometer).
- Wash hands thoroughly after handling raw meat.
- Keep thawing and uneaten cooked foods in the refrigerator.
- Do not place cooked meat on the same plate that was used to store raw meat.
- Use two cutting boards, one for raw meat and one for other foods. Wash and disinfect cutting boards and counters after each use with detergent in hot water followed by a solution of one-tablespoon bleach in one-half cup water (make fresh solution everyday).
- Consume only pasteurized milk and milk products.
- Wash hands after going to the bathroom or changing a diaper and before preparing or eating food. Teach your children to do the same.
- Keep infected children away from other children and from the elderly, and follow your doctor's advice about returning to school or day care.

Visit our website at: www.gchd.us or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov

Genesee County Health Department
630 S. Saginaw Street
Flint, Michigan 48502-1540

"Better Life through Better Health"