

Loss

Control



FARMERS

Information Bulletin

E. Coli

Certain types of *Escherichia coli* bacteria, commonly called *E. coli* can cause foodborne illness. Harmless strains of *E. coli* can be found widely in nature, including the intestinal tracts of humans and warm-blooded animals. Disease-causing strains, however, are a frequent cause of both intestinal and urinary-genital tract infections.

Several different strains of harmful *E. coli* can cause diarrheal disease. A particularly dangerous type is called enterohemorrhagic *E. coli*, or EHEC. EHEC often causes bloody diarrhea and can lead to kidney failure in children or people with weakened immune systems. Another foodborne illness is *Escherichia coli* O157:H7. Cattle are the main sources of *E. coli* O157:H7, but other domestic and wild mammals also can harbor these bacteria. *E. coli* O157:H7 infection can be prevented by thoroughly cooking ground beef, avoiding unpasteurized milk, and washing hands carefully.

How is *E. coli* transmitted?

E. coli bacteria and its toxins have been found in:

- Undercooked or raw hamburgers
- Salami
- Alfalfa sprouts
- Lettuce
- Unpasteurized milk, apple juice, apple cider
- Contaminated well water

Unsuspecting swimmers have been infected by accidentally swallowing unchlorinated or underchlorinated water in swimming pools contaminated by human feces. People also can get infected by swimming in sewage-contaminated water.

What are the symptoms of *E. coli* infection?

E. coli toxin can damage the lining of the intestine and cause other symptoms including:

- Nausea
- Severe abdominal cramps
- Watery or very bloody diarrhea
- Tiredness
- Vomiting (occasionally)

Occasionally, people develop low-grade fever or vomiting. Symptoms usually begin from 2 to 5 days after eating contaminated food and may last for 8 days.

How is *E. coli* diagnosed?

A health care provider can use laboratory tests to identify *E. coli* in the stool of an infected person.

How is *E. coli* infection treated?

Most people recover from *E. coli* infection within 5 to 10 days without treatment. Antibiotics are usually not helpful, and health care experts recommend against taking antidiarrheal medicines.

Some ways to prevent *E. coli* infection:

- Eat only thoroughly cooked beef and beef products.
- Cook ground beef patties to an internal temperature of 160 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Avoid unpasteurized juices
- Drink only pasteurized milk
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating raw or cooking

This bulletin is intended only as a reminder and is offered solely as a guide to assist management in its responsibility of providing a safer working environment. This bulletin is not intended to cover all possible hazardous conditions or unsafe acts that may exist. Other unsafe acts or hazardous conditions should also be noted and corrective action taken.