

E coli 0157

This leaflet tries to answer some of the questions you might have about E.coli 0157.

What is it?

E. coli is a group of bacteria that usually live in the intestine of people and animals. Most types are harmless, but one type known as *E. coli* 0157 produces a poison that can cause serious illness.

What are the symptoms?

Your symptoms might have included:

- diarrhoea.

More serious illness includes:

- bloody diarrhoea,
- a high temperature and shivering attacks,
- severe stomach pain,
- and a condition called Haemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS) which can lead to kidney failure.

The illness usually starts 1-6 days (average 2 days) after eating contaminated food.

What about the mess?

- If you have to clear up diarrhoea or other mess, take care and wear rubber gloves. Scoop up what you can with a dustpan or paper towel. Rinse down a WC, don't use a sink that is used for food preparation or washing up. Wash what is left with cloths, and warm soapy water. Pour dirty water down a WC afterwards. Clean all cloths and equipment with dilute bleach (1 eggcup in a small bucket of warm (not hot) water).
- Wash fouled sheets and clothing straight away. Fold them so that you don't touch the dirty parts. Wash on as hot a wash as possible. Do not over fill the washing machine.
- Household hygiene is very important, disinfect the WC area particularly the flush handle, basin taps and light switches.
- Make sure everyone uses their own towel and face cloth.

How did I catch it?

The usual way is eating or drinking anything containing *E. coli* 0157 bacteria. As *E. coli* 0157 comes from animals, eating food like:

- raw and undercooked meat and meat products (for example undercooked beef burgers),
 - unpasteurised milk,
- are the most likely sources.

Other sources are:

- infected people (especially in households, nurseries and schools),
- handling infected animals including pets and farm animals.

How long does it last?

The length of time varies, but it can last several weeks.

How is it treated?

- Doctors do not give antibiotics for this illness.

- It is important to keep drinking (clear fluids such as water or dilute fruit juice are a good idea) to stop dehydration.
- Take plenty of rest.
- **If diarrhoea persist, especially if blood or mucus are present, go back to your doctor.**
- Hospital treatment is usually necessary for the more severe symptoms.

[Can I give it to some one else?](#)

Yes! It is possible to pass the illness on and you should take every precaution to prevent this from happening. Good personal hygiene will reduce the risk of passing it on to others.

[When can I go back to work/school/nursery?](#)

You **must not** work if you are ill. If you work with food, attend school or care for vulnerable people you will be asked to provide further faecal specimens, the Environmental Health Officer or doctor will advise. You must still maintain good personal hygiene when you return.

[What can I do to prevent getting it again?](#)

1. Food

- If you are ill avoid preparing food for your self or others.
- Make sure all risky foods such as mince and burgers are thoroughly cooked. Make sure there is no pink meat present.
- Be careful not to spread the organism from raw to ready-to- eat food such as cold meats and salad.
- Clean and disinfect worktops after preparing raw meat.
- Make sure your fridge and freezer are working properly. The temperatures should be 1-4⁰C and minus 18⁰C respectively.

2. Personal hygiene

Everyone in the household should take care to wash their hands properly with soap and rinse them under running water after using the toilet and ..

- after you've cleared up diarrhoea
- after you've been nursing ill people
- after you've handled laundry or changed nappies
- before you cook or eat, and
- often during the preparation of food (especially after handling raw meat)

An antibacterial soap is an additional precaution.

[For further information contact](#)

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