

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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E. coli 0157:H7

What is E. coli 0157:H7?

Escherichia coli (E. coli) 0157:H7 are bacteria that live in the intestines of animals and people.

How is E. coli spread?

E. coli is spread most commonly by eating under cooked ground meat, such as hamburgers and contaminated raw vegetables and fruit. Contact with people who don't wash their hands after going to the bathroom or changing diapers is another way the disease is spread. You can also get E-coli from drinking raw (unpasteurized) milk and swimming in or drinking contaminated water.

What are the symptoms of E. coli?

- diarrhea - mild to severe, and may be bloody
- stomach cramps

How long after exposure do symptoms begin?

Symptoms usually occur in three to four days, sometimes as long as eight days.

How long is a person contagious?

Adults are usually contagious one week or less and children up to three weeks.

Are there complications?

Some people, especially children under five years old and the elderly may develop hemolytic uremic syndrome – red blood cells are destroyed and the kidneys fail.

Is there a treatment for E. coli 0157:H7?

See your doctor immediately if bloody diarrhea occurs. An accurate diagnosis is necessary. If you have bloody diarrhea, don't take antibiotics or diarrhea medicine until your doctor says that it's OK.

How can E. coli 0157:H7 be prevented?

- Thoroughly cook all meat, including hamburger. Make sure cooked meat is gray or brown throughout, juices run clear and the inside is hot.
- Keep raw meat away from other foods. Wash your hands, cutting board, counter, dishes, and knives and forks with hot soapy water after they touch raw meat, spinach, greens, or sprouts.
- Drink only pasteurized milk and milk products.
- Thoroughly wash raw fruits and vegetables before eating them. Wash skins and rinds before peeling or cutting them.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before handling food, after using the bathroom or changing diapers, and whenever they are dirty.
- Drink only water known to be safe. Municipal water treated with chlorine is generally safe.
- Do not swallow lake or pool water while you are swimming.

OVER
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HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:

- use soap and running water
- rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- wash all surfaces, including:
 - backs of hands
 - wrists
 - between fingers
 - under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands with a paper towel
- turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands

For more information on E coli, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.

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