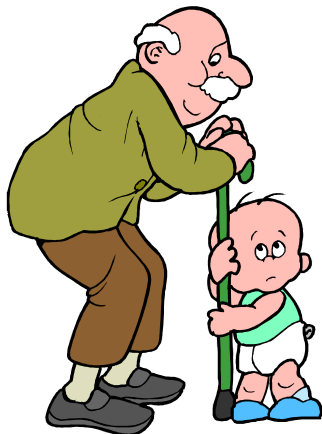


Staying away from Work, School or Preschool?

It is recommended that anyone with diarrhoea, even if the cause is unknown, should not attend work, school or preschool.

- Children with *E. coli* O157 should remain away from preschool or school until tests show they are free of the bacteria.
- Infected people in high risk occupations involving food preparation, looking after children or nursing etc. should not return to work until they have tested clear of *E. coli* O157.
- Two consecutive stool samples free from *E. coli* O157, taken more than 48 hours apart are required to indicate the bacteria is no longer present.

Contacts of cases (e.g. family members etc.) may remain at work, school or preschool provided they do not develop any symptoms, especially diarrhoea. One specimen clear from *E. coli* O157 may be required from contacts to check that they don't have the bacteria.



Other resources available on gastrointestinal illnesses:

- *E. coli* O157 - Risks on Farms
- Campylobacter
- Salmonella
- Giardia
- Cryptosporidium
- Yersinia
- Home Treatment of Raw Milk

COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

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Communicable Diseases
Community and Public Health
(a division of the Canterbury District Health Board)
October 2011
Code/Reference: MED0175
Authorised By: Resource Approval Panel

E. coli O157

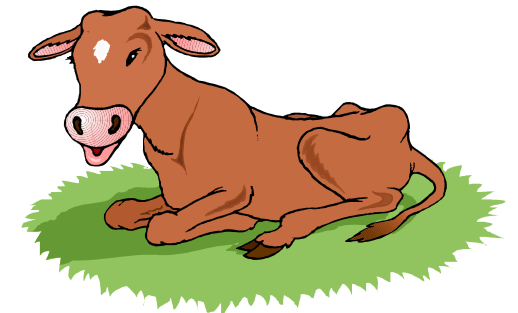
Escherichia coli O157:H7

or

Verotoxin producing
Escherichia coli (VTEC)

or

Shigatoxin-producing
Escherichia coli (STEC)



Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

What is it?

Why is it serious?

E. coli bacteria live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals, usually without causing illness. Most types are harmless, but some types such as O157 can cause specific disease

E. coli O157 can cause serious (occasionally fatal) illness by producing powerful toxins. Outbreaks of *E. coli* O157 can also occur

What are the Symptoms and Health Effects?

The illness usually begins after 2-3 days with severe abdominal pain and watery diarrhoea (which may contain blood). Anyone with bloody diarrhoea should consult a doctor, even if this requires visiting the doctor a second time.

Symptoms usually last between 5-10 days and most people recover without any long term effects

Some people show no symptoms when infected with *E. coli* O157, however they are still capable of passing the bacteria on to others.

Children under 5 years of age and elderly people have a higher risk of severe symptoms. 2-7% of children may develop 'Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome' (HUS) where they become anaemic, and their kidneys have trouble working and may be damaged. If this develops they need specialised treatment in hospital



How long is someone Infectious?

As long as the bacteria are in their intestines, people are infectious.

This can be up to a month from when the diarrhoea started.

How is it Spread?

Most people are infected with *E. coli* O157 by:

- Contact with some farm animals or animal faeces, mainly calves and cows
- Consuming unpasteurised milk and dairy products
- Drinking contaminated water
- Eating contaminated food, particularly undercooked minced beef
- Infection can be spread from person to person through not washing hands and drying thoroughly after going to the toilet



How is it Diagnosed?

E. coli O157 is diagnosed by a stool (faecal/poo) sample, and a doctor arranges the test.

How is it treated?

Diarrhoea usually settles without specific treatment, but complications may need appropriate treatment.

Antibiotics are not recommended for treatment of *E. coli* O157 cases.

How can infection be prevented?

Food Hygiene

- *E. coli* O157 bacteria survive refrigeration and freezing, but thorough cooking kills bacteria in food
- Cook all minced meat (e.g. hamburger patties, meatloaf etc.) and sausages thoroughly until there is no pink colour left.
- Reheat food until piping hot (over 60°C)
- Keep raw meat separate from cooked foods during preparation and stored covered
- Thoroughly clean all knives, cutting boards and other surfaces after contact with any raw meat by scrubbing in hot soapy water or dishwasher
- Consume only pasteurised milk or dairy products
- Drink water that is not contaminated by animal waste e.g. from streams, rivers, roof water
- Carefully wash all fruit and vegetables before eating them

Handwashing

Always thoroughly wash your hands in soapy water:

- After using the toilet, gardening, changing nappies or touching pets or other animals
- Before preparing food and eating

Children on farms need to be reminded to wash their hands regularly.

If somebody in your family has *E. coli* O157 infection, it is particularly important that they wash and dry their hands thoroughly and frequently with soap to avoid spreading the infection.

