

FACT SHEET

E. COLI O157:H7

Escherichia coli (E. coli) bacteria normally live in the intestines of people and animals. When you hear news reports about outbreaks of “E. coli” infections, they are usually talking about E. coli O157. Infections start when you ingest the bacteria – in other words, when you get tiny amounts of human or animal feces in your mouth. Unfortunately, this happens more often than you might think.

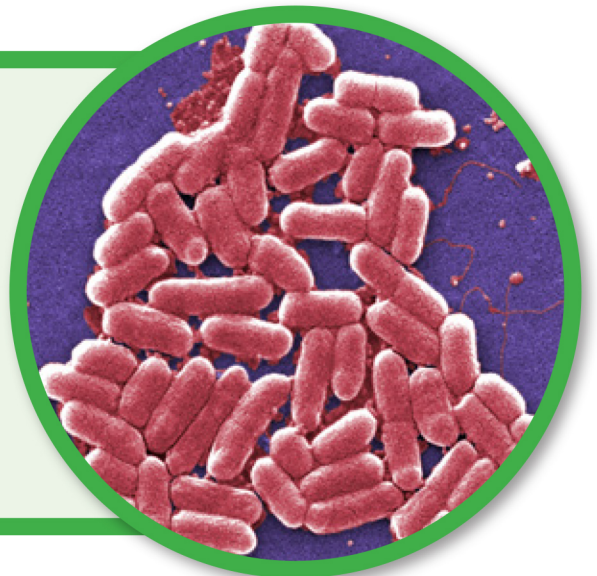
SOURCES: Undercooked ground beef, unpasteurized (raw) milk and juice, soft cheeses made from raw milk, and raw fruits and vegetables (such as sprouts)

INCUBATION PERIOD: 1-10 days

SYMPTOMS: Severe diarrhea that is often bloody, severe abdominal pain, and vomiting.

DURATION: 5-10 days

WHAT DO I DO?: Drink plenty of fluids and get rest. If you cannot drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration or if your symptoms are severe, call your doctor.



Simple food handling practices can help prevent *E. COLI O157:H7* infections:

- Wash hands thoroughly after using the bathroom or changing diapers and before preparing or eating food.
- Cook meats thoroughly. Ground beef and meat that has been needle-tenderized should be cooked to a temperature of at least 160°F/70°C. It's best to use a thermometer, as color is not a very reliable indicator of “doneness.”
- Avoid raw milk, unpasteurized dairy products, and unpasteurized juices (like fresh apple cider).
- Prevent cross contamination in food preparation areas by thoroughly washing hands, counters, cutting boards, and utensils after they touch raw meat.