

E. coli O157:H7 DIARRHEA

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is E. coli diarrhea?

Escherichia coli is a normal bacterium of the bowel; the O157:H7 strain, however, can cause a severe form of diarrheal illness and up to 10% of cases may experience a syndrome affecting blood and kidneys.

How is it spread?

The organism can be transmitted through almost any food item, but most commonly through undercooked meat, unpasteurized milk, contaminated apple cider, or on foods which have been cross - contaminated with these items. If personal hygiene is poor, an infected person can spread the bacteria.

How is it treated?

E coli O157:H7 diarrhea generally resolves without treatment, and antibiotics are not usually indicated. Additional fluids may be needed to combat dehydration, especially among children. On rare occasions, hospitalization may be required to combat blood and kidney complications.

How can we prevent E. coli Diarrhea?

- ▶ Wash hands with warm, soapy water after using the bathroom, before and during preparation of foods.
- ▶ Cook all meat to proper temperature, especially ground meats like hamburger, turkey burger, and hotdogs. Use a meat thermometer to check internal cooking temperature.
- ▶ When grilling, do not put cooked meat back on the same platter where the uncooked meat was stored.
- ▶ Have two cutting boards, one for raw meat and one for other foods.
- ▶ Wash and disinfect cutting boards and counters after use. Use an antimicrobial soap or a solution of one tablespoon bleach to one-half cup water.
- ▶ Wash all fruits and vegetables well. Peel if possible or use a stiff brush and wash vigorously.
- ▶ Refrigerate uneaten cooked foods immediately to prevent bacterial growth. When serving leftovers, heat thoroughly throughout.

SYMPTOMS OF E. coli DIARRHEA

- ▶ Watery or bloody diarrhea
- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Severe abdominal pain and cramping
- ▶ Fever



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