

E.coli O157

What is E.coli O157?

E. coli is a type of bacteria which is commonly found in the gut of animals and humans. Most of the time it is harmless but some strains, such as E. coli O157, can cause illness. The symptoms can range from mild to bloody diarrhoea, abdominal pain and kidney problems. It can be a serious illness for the elderly and young children.

How did I get it?

Illness has been linked to eating contaminated meat and dairy products, commonly untreated milk and undercooked minced beef products such as burgers.

The infection can be passed from person to person and contracted from animals, particularly farm animals.

What is the incubation period?

This is the delay between the bacteria entering your body and you becoming unwell. It is usually between 3 and 4 days.

Should I stay away from work or school?

You **must** seek advice from the Environmental Health Department before returning to work. You should also notify your employer and comply with any company rules regarding clearance to return to work.

You must also seek advice if you are, a food handler, a child under 5 years old, or work with vulnerable groups e.g. residents in nursing homes or children in nurseries, **and** have been in contact with someone who has this infection.

If you think that other people at work or school may be suffering from the same illness please let Environmental Health know.

FACTFILE

Guidance on Infectious Disease

E. coli O157

How can I avoid passing it on?

Always wash and dry your hands thoroughly

- **after** using the toilet, handling soiled bedding/clothes and changing nappies
- **before** eating and preparing food
- Ensure that door and toilet handles, taps and toilet seats are cleaned and disinfected regularly
- Whilst you are ill try to avoid sharing towels and bath water

How do I stop it from happening again?

- Make sure that food containing minced beef is thoroughly cooked. Cook burgers until the juices run clear and there are no pink bits inside
- Keep raw and cooked foods separate. Always store cooked foods above raw foods in the refrigerator.
- Do not use the same equipment for preparing raw and cooked foods.
- Wash all salad/vegetables which are to be eaten raw
- Always wash and dry your hands thoroughly:
 1. before preparing food.
 2. after handling raw foods and before going on to handle ready to eat foods.
 3. after handling or stroking animals.
- Supervise young children if you take them to visit a farm. Children will avoid infection by taking the following precautions:
 1. Wash and dry your hands thoroughly after touching an animal.
 2. Do not eat or drink anything at all while going round the farm, only eat when well away from animals, after thoroughly washing your hands.
 3. Do not put your face against an animal, and do not put your hands in your mouth after touching an animal.
 4. Do not touch animal droppings, but wash and dry your hands immediately if you do.
 5. Clean your shoes when you leave the farm, or when you get home, and wash your hands thoroughly.