**E. coli O157:H7 (E. coli infection)**

**What is E. coli O157:H7?**
E. coli are bacteria (germs) that normally live in the intestines of humans and animals. One particular type of E. coli called O157:H7 can cause severe diarrhea and lead to kidney damage. Some people, particularly children under 5 years, develop a complication called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) which often affects the kidneys.

**What are the symptoms?**
Symptoms normally begin 1 to 10 days (average 3 – 4 days) after becoming infected and may include:
- Diarrhea (can be severe and/or bloody)
- Vomiting
- Stomach cramps
- Mild fever
- Fatigue

Some infected people have no symptoms at all but can still spread the infection to others.

**How is it spread?**
- Eating raw or undercooked ground beef and other meats.
- Consuming raw milk or milk products.
- Eating contaminated fruits and vegetables.
- Contact with an infected animal and/or its stool.
- When hands, food, water or objects (toys, etc.) become contaminated with infected stool and then gets into someone’s mouth.
- Swallowing contaminated water (e.g. lakes, rivers, springs, streams, ponds, swimming pools, hot tubs).
- Not washing hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or having contact with animals.

**Who gets E. coli?**
Anyone can get E. coli. Those who travel internationally are more likely to develop infection. Infants, young children, the elderly, and those immunocompromised are at greater risk to develop serious complications.

**What should I do if I have symptoms?**
- Contact your health care provider.

**How is E. coli diagnosed?**
- By testing a stool sample.

**How is E. coli treated?**
- Most people who have healthy immune systems will recover without treatment.
- Antidiarrheal medications such as Imodium are not recommended.

**How can I prevent the spread of E. coli?**
- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds:
  - After using the bathroom or changing diapers.
  - After contact with animals or their environments (petting zoos, farms, fairs).
  - Before eating or preparing foods.
  - After handling raw meat.
- Assist young children with hand washing.
- Properly dispose of dirty diapers.
- Cook ground beef to 160°F.
- Wash and/or peel raw fruits and vegetables.
- Do not consume raw milk, milk products, or unpasteurized juices.
- Prevent cross contamination in the kitchen:
  - Use separate cutting boards for meats and other foods.
  - Clean and sanitize cutting boards, counter tops, and utensils.
- Do not prepare food for others.
- Do not swallow water when swimming.
- Do not swim while you have diarrhea and for two week after your diarrhea stops.
- Do not send your child to daycare or preschool if he/she has diarrhea.
- Do not go to work if you are a health care worker, food handler, or day care worker.

**For further information visit:**
- [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)
- [http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/](http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/)

Report E. coli cases to Saint Louis County Department of Public Health by calling 314 615 1630

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