



Central Michigan District Health Department  
“Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities”

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## **E. Coli**

(Escherichia Coli 0157:H7)

### **What is E. Coli?**

E. Coli is one of the most common bacteria known. It is commonly found in the intestinal tracts of warm-blooded animals and humans and is usually harmless to human health. However, a certain subgroup, E. Coli 0157:H7, can cause a very severe foodborne illness and occasionally death.

### **How is E. Coli spread?**

Transmission occurs mainly by eating contaminated food. It is most often due to improperly cooked beef (especially hamburger), raw milk, and fruits or vegetables grown in E. Coli contaminated soil. It can be passed from person to person with lack of proper handwashing. Outbreaks have been linked to contaminated apple cider, raw vegetables, salami, yogurt, drinking water and ingestion of contaminated recreational water (swimming pools, crowded lakes).

### **What are the signs and symptoms of infection by E. Coli?**

- Diarrhea (sometimes bloody)
- Abdominal cramps
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Low fever

In children and the elderly, infection can be deadly. These symptoms occur 3-4 days after coming into contact with E. Coli.

### **How can I prevent infection by E. Coli?**

- Cook all of the pink out of hamburger, until center is light gray and the juices run clear.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Anything that raw meat comes into contact with must be washed with warm soapy water.
- Frozen meat should be thawed completely by defrosting in a microwave, as part of the cooking process, or by leaving it in the refrigerator for about 24 hours. Never thaw meat at room temperature.
- Finally, thoroughly washing hands with soap and warm water after handling meat, contact with animals or using the bathroom will prevent transfer of the bacteria to another person and to food.
- In an outbreak of diarrhea due to E. Coli 0157:H7, immediate involvement of public health authorities is critical. Diagnosed children in childcare centers, people employed as food handlers, or those that provide child or patient care, should not return to their work until 2 successive negative stools are obtained.