

What is E.Coli 0157:H7?

E. coli are germs (bacteria) that normally live in the bowel of people and animals. Most strains of this germ are harmless, but the strain called *E. coli* 0157:H7 can make people sick.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms are severe stomach cramps and diarrhea. Some people vomit or run a fever, but these are less common. Sometimes the diarrhea turns bloody after 2 or 3 days. In a small number of people, this strain of *E. coli* can cause a rare but serious problem called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS).

HUS is a disease that affects the kidneys and the blood clotting system. It starts about a week after the diarrhea begins and affects more children than adults. In bad cases, dialysis is used for a while to do the kidney's work. Some people also develop a bleeding problem or low blood count (anemia).

Where is E coli 0157:H7 found?



It lives in the gut of healthy cattle and can get into the meat when cattle are slaughtered. The most common food source is ground beef (hamburger), because the grinding spreads the germs throughout the meat. These germs have also been found in raw milk, roast beef, apple cider, salami, and sometimes on vegetables fertilized with contaminated cow manure.

How is it spread?

E. coli 0157:H7 must be swallowed to cause infection. This can happen if you eat or drink something that contains these germs and is not properly cooked or pasteurized. The germs can be spread from person to person if someone who is infected does not thoroughly wash his or her hands with soap or water before preparing food for others.

How can you prevent it?

The most important things to remember are that the germs can only make you sick if you swallow them, and that the germs are killed by thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water and by thorough cooking. Follow the tips below; if you make them your habits, you can prevent *E. coli* 0157:H7—as well as other diseases:



- Do not eat unpasteurized dairy products (such as cheese) or undercooked or rare ground beef.
- Do not drink raw milk or cider made from unwashed apples.
- Always cook meat to the proper temperature. Cook hamburgers until the center is 155 degrees.
- Do not put cooked meat or other prepared food on a dish or cutting board that held raw meat.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water after going to the bathroom or changing a diaper. Wash them again before touching or eating food.

For more information, Contact Foodlink's Nutritionist (585) 323-3380 x125