

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

E. coli O157:H7 Accompanying: Hand Washing Fact Sheet

What is E. coli O157:H7?

E. coli O157:H7 is a type of bacteria that causes intestinal infection. It is commonly called E. coli.

What are the signs and symptoms of an E. coli infection?

The signs and symptoms of this illness may include headache, severe abdominal pain, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), nausea, vomiting, and dehydration. People may or may not also have a fever.

How are E. coli infections spread?

E. coli is spread by eating food contaminated by the feces of an infected animal or person or by ingesting E. coli infected animals used as food. It most commonly occurs from eating undercooked beef, especially ground beef, or from consuming raw (unpasteurized) milk.

What is the incubation period of E. coli and how long is it contagious?

The incubation period ranges from two to eight days with a median of three to four days. A person is contagious during the acute symptom period and for a few weeks after symptoms stop.

What should I do if I think I have an E. coli infection?

Persons experiencing these symptoms should see their physicians. Children **cannot** attend daycare and need a certified clearance of two negative stool cultures before being re-admitted. School-aged students may return after 24 hours without symptoms.

How can I prevent myself and others from getting an E. coli infection?

Thorough hand washing, following the guidelines in the accompanying fact sheet, with soap and water, proper disposal of soiled diapers and human waste, and preventing food and beverage contamination can prevent infection. Consumption of pasteurized dairy products only and heating beef to an internal temperature of 155°F for at least 15-16 seconds can prevent infection. Infected persons with diarrhea should avoid public recreational water activities.

For more information, please contact the Florida Department of Health in Orange County Epidemiology Program at 407-858-1420. You may also visit the Epidemiology Program website, <http://orchd.com/generalHealth/epidemiology/index.asp>, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, <http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/general/index.html>, or the DOH-Orange School Health website at <http://orchd.com/personalHealth/schoolHealth/index.asp> for additional information.

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