

Escherichia coli (E. coli)

What is *E. coli*?

- *Escherichia coli (E. coli)* are bacteria that affect the stomach and intestines.
- Most types of *E. coli* are harmless; a few types can make you sick.

How does *E. coli* spread?

- Water-to-Person: Swallowing water while swimming or drinking untreated water.
- Person-to-Person: Caring for sick people with vomiting and diarrhea.
- Food-to-Person: Eating food or drinking liquid handled by a sick person who did not wash their hands well, or drinking unpasteurized (raw) milk.
- Surface-to-Person: Touching a surface or object handled by a sick person or within an animal living area, such as a petting zoo, then touching your mouth.

What are the symptoms?

- You may get severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), and vomiting.
- If you have fever, it usually is less than 101°F.
- Symptoms usually begin 3-4 days after exposure.
- Most people get better within 5–7 days.
- Severe, even life-threatening, illness is possible for young children, the elderly, and those with health problems.
- Children and pregnant women should take special care to avoid dehydration, consult a health care provider on preventing dehydration.

How do I stop the spread?

- Wash your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom, changing diapers, before preparing or eating food, and after contact with animals or their living area.
- Adults and children, with diarrhea or loose stools, should not be in childcare facilities until their diarrhea has resolved.
- Do not swim for 2 weeks after the diarrhea has stopped.
- Wash yourself and your child thoroughly with soap and water before swimming.
- Take your kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers often when swimming.
- Do not change diapers at poolside.
- Do not swallow water when swimming
- Cook ground beef and meat to at least 160°F and use a thermometer.
- Avoid raw milk, dairy products, and juices, like fresh apple cider.
- Prevent cross contamination in food preparation areas by thoroughly washing hands, counters, cutting boards, and utensils after touching raw meat.

Where can I find more information?

- Go to cdc.gov and type *E. coli* in SEARCH box.



Alabama Department of Public Health

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