

This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,
Worcestershire Health and Care Trust,
2 Kings Court, Charles Hasting Way,
Worcester. WR5 1JR.

or by email 📧:

WHCNHS.communications@nhs.net



**Worcestershire
Health and Care**
NHS Trust



E COLI 0157

What is it?

Your questions answered

**An Information Leaflet
for
Patients and Staff**

WHAT IS IT?

E coli is a bacteria normally found in the gut. There are different types of E coli, some harmless and others which can cause a number of diseases.

E coli 0157 is a type of food poisoning.

HOW DO YOU CATCH IT?

E coli 0157 is found mainly in cattle and possibly other domesticated animals.

Humans can become ill with E coli 0157 after eating food contaminated with the bacteria, e.g. undercooked meat (especially minced beef products), unpasteurised products, e.g. milk or yoghurt etc, or raw unwashed vegetables which have been contaminated with animal faeces. Infection can also be passed from person to person and from contact with infected animals unless scrupulous personal hygiene is practised.



HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SOMEONE HAS IT?

E coli 0157 can cause a wide range of illnesses from mild diarrhoea to haemorrhagic colitis (inflammation of the gut and bloody stools) with severe abdominal pain. The illness may be self limiting and will resolve in a week. Hospital admission is likely in about one third to one half of diagnosed cases. A small number of patients (5% of cases) may develop a type of renal failure which in some cases can be serious (haemolytic uraemic syndrome).

WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

The time taken from swallowing the germ until the illness starts is usually between 1 to 6 days.

IS IT INFECTIOUS?

As with all gastro-intestinal infections, the risk of spread of infection is greatest whilst the person still has symptoms of diarrhoea. The germ may continue to be passed in the stool for some time after the symptoms have stopped and thorough hand washing after using the toilet is particularly important.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT THE SPREAD OF IT?

Unsafe handling of raw meat and poor kitchen and personal hygiene mainly causes infection.

- Uncooked food and cooked food must not be kept next to each other in the fridge or on work surfaces.
- Always ensure raw food is not stored above cooked food in the fridge.
- Thoroughly defrost all meat before cooking.
- Cook food thoroughly, especially beef burger and minced beef products, until juices run clear.
- Wash hands thoroughly with plenty of soap and warm running water and dry them well.

HOW LONG SHOULD THE PERSON BE EXCLUDED FROM WORK OR THE CARE SETTING?

An Environmental Health Officer or Public Health will contact you to discuss your illness, investigate the source and offer further advice.

Normally people may return to work once they have not had any signs of illness (diarrhoea or vomiting) for at least 48 hours. However, anyone who works with food will need to stay off work longer.

Exclusion from swimming should be for 2 weeks following last episode of diarrhoea.