

# CDRS

Communicable Disease Reporting System

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE FACT SHEET

## E. COLI 0157:H7

E. Coli 0157:H7 is one of hundreds of strains of the bacterium *Escherichia coli*. Although most strains are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals, this strain produces a powerful toxin (poison) and can cause severe illness.

### Symptoms

- Diarrhea (which often becomes bloody) and stomach cramps
- Slight fever (often no fever). Symptoms can appear between 10 hours to 8 days after exposure, but usually between 3-4 days
- The disease may be simple or it may result in complications that require kidney dialysis, kidney transplant, or death.

### Transmission

- The disease can spread from cattle to people through raw or undercooked beef, unpasteurized milk or contaminated water. It can also be spread through foods that have come in contact with undercooked beef or someone with the disease.
- An infected person may spread the illness to others by failure to wash hands well after a bowel movement.

### Treatment

- *E. coli O157:H7* is diagnosed by examining a stool sample.
- Anti-diarrheal medications should not be used
- A physician should decide whether the client should take an antibiotic. The antibiotic may cause the bacteria to stay in the system longer and possibly cause complications.

### Prevention

- Wash hands thoroughly using soap and warm water. Wash after going to the bathroom or changing a diaper and before preparing or eating food.
- It is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration (fluid loss). Do not use anti-diarrhea medicines.
- Cook all meat, especially ground beef, thoroughly. Contaminated meat looks and smells normal. There is no risk from *E. coli O157:H7* if the meat is thoroughly cooked.
- Wash hands thoroughly after handling raw hamburger.
- Clean all utensils and surfaces after contact with raw meat.
- Make certain that cooked meat is grey or brown (not pink) throughout. Cook ground beef until the thickest part of the meat is 160° F. There should be no bloody juices.
- If you are served pink meat, especially hamburger, in a restaurant, send it back for further cooking.
- Drink only pasteurized milk. Eat only milk products (for example cheese) made with pasteurized milk.
- Teach children good hygiene habits.

### Symptoms

A physician should decide whether the client should take an antibiotic. There is no evidence that antibiotics improve the course of disease, and it is thought that treatment with some antibiotics may cause kidney complications.

**All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.**

Franklin County



Board of Health

Report Disease With Ease - 24 hours a day

[www.cdinfo.com](http://www.cdinfo.com)

Columbus and Franklin County Communicable Disease Reporting System

c/o The Franklin County Board of Health, 280 East Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43215

(614) 719-8888 ♦ (614) 719-8890 fax ♦ [cds@franklincountyohio.gov](mailto:cds@franklincountyohio.gov) - email

