

Wednesday, 17 October 2012

Health Protection



E. coli O157

Introduction
Enterohemorrhagic *E. coli* (EHEC) is a particular strain of the bacteria, *E. coli*, which causes severe disease in humans. EHEC O157 is the most common strain, although there are other strains (generally referred to as *E. coli* O157).

The illness
EHEC O157 can cause a range of symptoms from mild diarrhoea to severe illness. In some cases, it can lead to kidney failure, haemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) and death. EHEC O157 is most commonly associated with undercooked ground beef, but it can also be found in other foods such as raw milk, soft cheese, and fermented sausage. In the most recent outbreak in the UK, 70% of patients infected with EHEC O157 have eaten undercooked ground beef. EHEC O157 is also found in raw milk, soft cheese, and fermented sausage. EHEC O157 is most commonly associated with undercooked ground beef, but it can also be found in other foods such as raw milk, soft cheese, and fermented sausage.

The incubation period can range from 1-14 days, and is most commonly 3-4 days. Symptoms usually occur within one week, except in cases of HUS or TSS. The illness is usually self-limiting and lasts for 5-10 days, but can be longer. Some patients may experience neurological symptoms. There is no specific treatment and each phase of the illness is treated separately. Antibiotics are not given and may increase the risk of complications such as HUS.

The source
The main source is the gut of healthy cattle, although it may be present in sheep and other animals. It can spread to humans in a number of ways:
• Eating undercooked, rarely and occasionally infected meat such as in beef burgers.
• Drinking raw milk, usually from small-scale producers.
• Consuming soft cheese, fermented sausage, and other fermented products.
• Contact with infected animals, such as in farms, petting zoos, and public houses.
• Drinking or swimming in untreated water (especially in rural areas) such as river water, stream water, or public water.
• Contact with infected cattle from petting zoos and other public places.

The organism is very easily passed from one person to another. This leads to secondary spread, which is the most common route. It is most commonly spread through direct contact, but it can also be spread through contaminated food, including other people's food, and in particular common in households, nurseries and child day care.

This factsheet for health professionals contains information on *E. coli* O157, a strain of bacteria that can cause severe disease in humans.

Information on prevention is included.

Details

- Format
- 2 page A4 factsheet
- Target group
- Health professionals

Downloads

Attachment	Size
Professional EColi Factsheet 10 12 0.pdf	513.96 KB

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