

Wednesday, 17 October 2012

Health Protection



E. coli O157

Introduction
Enterohemorrhagic *E. coli* (EHEC) is a particular strain of the bacteria, but usually appears in humans, which produce potent toxins and can cause severe disease in humans. EHEC O157 is the most common strain, although there are other strains given the name that are not commonly found in humans.

The illness
EHEC O157 can cause a range of symptoms from mild diarrhoea to severe illness. In severe cases, it can lead to kidney failure, haemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) and death. Symptoms usually appear 3-5 days after infection. EHEC O157 is commonly found in young children and in the major cause of acute renal failure in the UK. It is found in up to 10% of patients infected with EHEC O157. Some patients, usually adults with EHEC O157, develop thrombotic thrombocytopenic syndrome (TTS), where the blood becomes thicker and clots together with neurological complications.

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 TTS. The illness is usually self-limiting and will be resolved in 5-10 days and usually lasting from 7-10 days, but in some cases, some individuals will die. 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 beef, usually minced meat such as in beef burgers.
• Drinking untreated milk from cattle. However, it has also been associated with other foods, such as unspiced vegetables and salads. Due to cross contamination.
• Contact with infected animals, such as in farms, petting zoos, open farms or public farms.
• Drinking or swimming in untreated water (especially in animal faeces) such as river water, stream water or untreated wells.
• Contact with other animals that have previously grazed the area.

The organism is very easily passed from one person to another. This leads to secondary spread, which is the main cause of most cases of infection. It is of the major public health concern, but those who have been infected with it can lead to outbreaks involving much more widespread. It is most likely to occur through contaminated food, including other people's food, such as handling food, and is particularly 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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