

# Parent Food Safety Guide

for

# E. coli



## What is E. coli?

Escherichia coli (E. coli) are members of a large group of bacterial germs that inhabit the intestinal tract of humans and other warm-blooded animals. Most strains—or serotypes—of E. coli do not cause disease in humans, but the toxic serotypes can cause serious illness and even death. The most common toxic strain is O157:H7, but there are others that can cause illness.



## How do you get E. coli?

E. coli is often contracted by consuming food or beverage that has been contaminated by animal (especially cattle) manure. The majority of food borne E. coli outbreaks has been traced to contaminated ground beef; however leafy vegetables that have been contaminated in fields or during processing have been increasingly identified as the source of outbreaks, as have unpasteurized (raw) milk and cheese, unpasteurized apple juice and cider, alfalfa and radish sprouts, orange juice, and even water. There have also been outbreaks associated with petting zoos and agricultural fairs.



## What to look for:

The first symptom of E. coli infection is the onset of abdominal pain and severe cramps, followed within 24 hours by diarrhea, often bloody. This is hemorrhagic colitis, and it typically occurs within 2 to 5 days of ingestion of E. coli; however the incubation period—the time between the ingestion of E. coli bacteria and the onset of illness—may be as broad as 1 to 10 days.



## What to do:

Seek medical attention. Ask your healthcare provider for a stool sample to confirm or rule out E. coli infection. There is no 'cure' for E. coli infection, but prompt medical attention can alleviate pain and reduce the chance of serious complications like HUS (Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome).



## Prevention:

Be a smart consumer and avoid dangerous foods. When cooking with meat, especially ground beef, thoroughly clean all surfaces the raw meat touched (counters, cutting boards, sinks, hands, utensils, faucets, plates). Cook meats to safe temperatures – use a digital thermometer to check. Keep receipts for all food purchases. Wash hands often.

For more information, visit [www.about-ecoli.com](http://www.about-ecoli.com)

## MARLER CLARK

MARLER CLARK LLP PS IS THE NATION'S FOREMOST LAW FIRM REPRESENTING VICTIMS OF FOOD POISONING.

This brochure is part of our on-going effort to end the need for E. coli litigation in this country.

Until then, you can contact us at

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