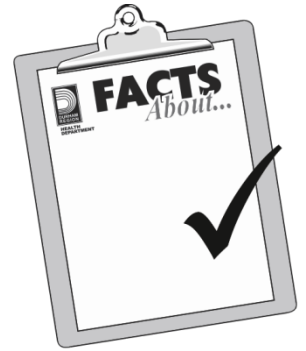




FACTS

About...



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

E.coli O157:H7

What is it?

E. coli (short for *Escherichia coli*) are bacteria which can cause many human illnesses. *E. coli* O157:H7 is a specific strain of these bacteria, and can cause serious gastrointestinal illness. The infectious dose is very low.

E. coli a disease of public health significance and must be reported to the Health Department.

How is it spread?

E. coli bacteria are found in the intestines of cows and other farm animals. Animal feces can contaminate meat, food, milk or water. You can become sick by eating fruits, vegetables and undercooked hamburgers, drinking unpasteurized milk, juices and ciders, and produce as well as swimming in polluted pools and lakes. You can also become sick by touching animals and the areas they live in (such as petting zoos). If you are sick, you can pass the bacteria to others by not washing your hands properly after using the washroom or changing the diaper of a sick child.

What do I look for?

You may start to feel sick within 2-10 days, but usually in about 3-4 days after the bacteria gets into you.

You may have diarrhea that turns bloody. You may also have stomach pain, nausea, fever and feel tired. It is often so severe that you might have to go to the hospital. Older people and children are at a higher risk of serious illness. Children under 5 years can develop a serious complication called Haemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS). Deaths from complications of the illness can occur.

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For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-666-6241 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How is it treated?

In most cases, it will go away on its own. For severe illness, seek medical attention. If you are vomiting and have diarrhea, you should drink a lot of fluids. Fluids with water, sugar and salts (such as sport drinks) can help prevent dehydration.

How can I protect myself?

- Cook all food from animal sources, especially ground beef, to 74°C (165°F) or greater, until no pink meat remains, and juices are clear. Make sure you use a meat thermometer to check the temperature.
- Drink and eat only pasteurized milk, dairy products, apple juice or cider products.
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables under running water from a safe supply.
- Always drink water from a safe supply. If you have a private well, test the water for bacteria at least four times per year. The Health Department will give you sample bottles and help you understand the results.
- Wash your hands well, with warm running water and soap, rubbing together for at least 15 seconds, after using the washroom, changing diapers, before eating and after preparing foods.
- If you are a food handler or care for children, the elderly or hospitalized people, you should not work until after you feel better, and two stool samples (taken least 24 hours apart) test negative for the bacteria. The Health Department can assist in testing by providing stool sample kits.
- If you are sick, do not use swimming pools or hot tubs until 48 hours after you feel better.

More information can be obtained from

Durham Region Health Department, Environmental Help Line
905-723-3818 or 1-888-777-9613

August 8, 2018

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