

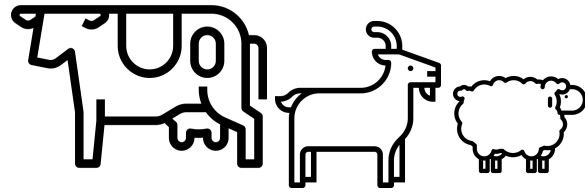


Shiga Toxin Producing *E. coli*

Fact Sheet



There are hundreds of strains of *E. coli* and most strains do not make people sick. Some strains, including *E. coli* O157:H7, produce a toxin called "Shiga toxin" that can make people sick (also called STEC).



E. coli live in the intestines of people and animals including cows, goats, sheep, deer, and elk. A major source for human illness is cows. STEC generally does not make animals sick.

Common Signs and Symptoms



Diarrhea



Stomach Pain



Nausea and Vomiting



Fever

Symptoms usually start one to ten days after swallowing the bacteria and usually last five to seven days. Diarrhea can be bloody. People who only have diarrhea usually recover completely.

In some people, STEC can cause a complication called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). Children under the age of five, women, and the elderly are most at risk for HUS. HUS can damage the kidneys and cause long term complications such as blindness, paralysis, and kidney failure.



You should not work if you are sick with STEC. This is especially important if you are a food handler, child care worker, or healthcare worker.



Talk to a health care provider if you think you have STEC. Your provider may ask for a stool sample to send to a laboratory. Most people do not need treatment. Do not take antibiotics or antidiarrheal medications, since these can make the illness worse. People with HUS may need treatment in a hospital.

Spread of Shiga Toxin Producing *E. coli*

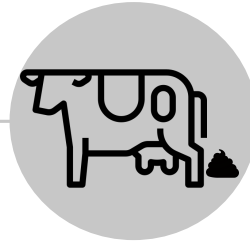
People can get sick with STEC through:



Eating Contaminated Food



Drinking Contaminated Water or Raw Milk



Contact with Stool of Infected Animals



Swallowing Contaminated Recreational Water

STEC spreads when people swallow contaminated stool. This can occur when touching the environment in petting zoos and other animal exhibits and then touching your mouth. It also spreads by eating food prepared by sick people who did not wash their hands well after using the toilet.

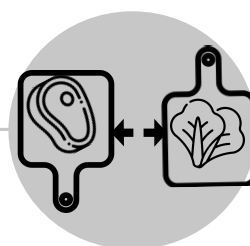
Prevent Shiga Toxin Producing *E. coli*



Cook All Food Products Thoroughly



Do Not Drink Raw Milk or Unpasteurized Dairy Products or Juices



Use Separate Cutting Boards for Raw and Cooked Meat and Vegetables, Fruit, or Cheese



Wash All Fruits and Vegetables Before Eating



Always Wash Your Hands With Soap And Water:

- Before eating and before and after preparing food
- After using the toilet or changing diapers
- After touching animals

STEC can also be prevented by not swallowing water when swimming or playing in recreational water. People with diarrhea should not share baths with others, prepare food for others, or swim until two weeks after diarrhea ends.

For More Information, Visit:



1. www.maine.gov/dhhs/stec
2. www.cdc.gov/ecoli

You can also call Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821.