

What are other steps I should take?

- ◆ Do not eat undercooked ground beef.
- ◆ Do not swallow water from pools, ponds, lakes, or water parks. Do not swim in a pool, pond, lake, or water park if you have diarrhea.
- ◆ Do not make food for others if you have diarrhea.
- ◆ Do not eat or drink unpasteurized milk and dairy food, such as cheese made with unpasteurized milk. Do not drink unpasteurized apple cider or untreated water.
- ◆ Wash all fruits and vegetables before you peel, slice or eat.
- ◆ Wash hands with warm water and soap after changing diapers, using the toilet, and touching animals or their droppings.
- ◆ Follow directions from public health officials on what foods to avoid during an outbreak.

Where can I get more information?

- ◆ Your health care provider
- ◆ Your local health department
- ◆ New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
<http://www.nj.gov/health>
- ◆ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli>

This information has been brought to you by:

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
Communicable Disease Service
P.O. Box 369, Trenton, NJ 08625
Phone: (609)588-7500
<http://nj.gov/health/cd/index.html>



December 2008

C1491

E. coli Illness

Protect Yourself



What is *E. coli* illness?

E. coli are germs that live inside the intestines of healthy people and animals, like cows. Most types of *E. coli* are harmless, but some types (such as *E. coli* O157:H7) can cause serious illness.

What are the symptoms of *E. coli* illness?

- ◆ Mild to severe diarrhea, which may contain blood
- ◆ Stomach pains or cramps
- ◆ Nausea (feeling like you are going to throw up)
- ◆ Vomiting (throwing up)



Some people sick with *E. coli* can have a complication that damages the kidneys. It can even cause death.

Who can get *E. coli*?

Anyone can get sick with *E. coli*. People over 65 years of age and children under five years of age are at greatest risk of becoming seriously ill from *E. coli*.



How is *E. coli* spread?

People get infected by swallowing *E. coli* germs. There are several ways that *E. coli* can be swallowed:

- ◆ Eating undercooked ground beef and unpasteurized foods such as milk, dairy products, apple cider, etc.
- ◆ Eating foods (such as fruits and vegetables) grown with water containing *E. coli*.
- ◆ Touching farm animals and petting zoo animals or touching their droppings and then not washing your hands properly.

It is also important to know that infected people have *E. coli* in their stool and can spread it to other people if they do not wash their hands properly after using the bathroom.

Infected people can also spread *E. coli* by swimming in pools, water parks, ponds and lakes. The tiny, invisible amount of stool on their bodies gets in the water where it can be easily swallowed by other swimmers.

What can I do to prevent *E. coli* illness?

- ◆ Cook ground beef or hamburger to 155°F. Always use a food thermometer (in the thickest part of the meat) to test the temperature. You cannot tell if a hamburger is cooked just by looking.
- ◆ Do not order rare or medium-rare hamburgers at a restaurant (especially for children under 12). If you receive an undercooked burger, ask that it be cooked longer. Be sure to ask for a new bun and a clean plate, too!
- ◆ Freeze or refrigerate meat as soon as you get home from the grocery store. Defrost foods in the refrigerator or by microwaving, not on a counter top.



Avoid getting raw meat or its juices on other foods:

- ◆ Keep raw meat away from fruit, vegetables, cooked food, and all ready-to-eat food.
- ◆ Thoroughly wash hands, food contact surfaces and cooking tools with warm water and soap after touching raw food.
- ◆ Use one cutting board for raw meat only and another cutting board for other foods.