

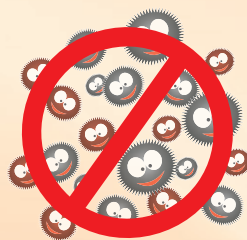
What can you do to prevent E. coli O157:H7 infection?

- Cook all ground beef and hamburgers thoroughly. If you are served an undercooked hamburger or other ground beef product in a restaurant, send it back for further cooking. You may want to ask for a new bun and a clean plate, too.



- Drink only pasteurized milk or juice.

- Keep raw meat separate from ready-to-eat foods. Never place cooked hamburgers or ground beef on the unwashed plate that previously held raw patties.



- Drink water that has been treated with chlorine or other effective disinfectants.



- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly, especially those that will not be cooked.

- Make sure that persons with diarrhea, especially children, wash their hands carefully with soap after bowel movements to reduce the risk of spreading infection, and that persons wash their hands after changing soiled diapers.

- After contact with cattle or their manure (feces), wash your hands thoroughly with running water and soap. Children under the age of 5 years old should be extra cautious around cattle (including those in petting zoos).



- Avoid swallowing lake or pool water while swimming. Anyone with a diarrheal illness should avoid swimming in public pools or lakes, sharing baths with others, and preparing food for others.



Center for Disease Control,
Department of Health, Taiwan, R.O.C.
CDC Hotline: 0800-024-582
Website: <http://www.cdc.gov.tw>



Enterohemorrhagic

E. coli Infection



Center for Disease Control,
Department of Health, Taiwan, R.O.C.



What is Escherichia coli O157:H7?

Escherichia coli O157:H7 is one of hundreds of strains of the bacterium Escherichia coli. Although most strains are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals, this strain produces a powerful toxin and can cause severe illness.



What illness does E. coli O157:H7 cause?

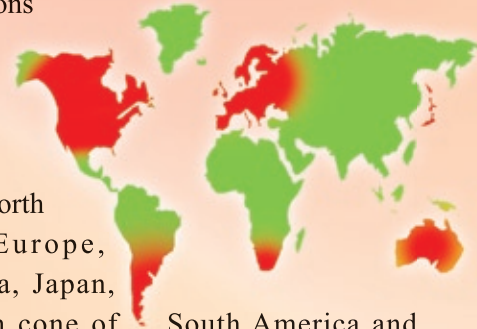
The incubation period is 2-10 days, with a median of 3-4 days.

E. coli O157:H7 infection often causes severe bloody diarrhea and abdominal cramps; usually little or no fever is present, and the illness resolves in 5 to 10 days. In some persons, particularly children and the elderly, the infection can also cause a complication called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), in which the red blood cells are destroyed and the kidneys fail. About 2%-7% of infections lead to this complication. In the United States, HUS is the principal cause of acute kidney failure in children, and most cases of HUS are caused by E. coli O157:H7.



Where does the disease caused by Escherichia coli O157:H7 occur?

These infections are now recognized to be an important problem in North America, Europe, South Africa, Japan, the southern cone of South America and Australia. In Taiwan, the first and only confirmed case was found on August 2001.



How does E. coli O157:H7 spread?

The organism can be found on a small number of cattle farms and can live in the intestines of healthy cattle. Meat can become contaminated during slaughter, and organisms can be thoroughly mixed into beef when it is ground. Bacteria present on the cow's udders or on equipment may get into raw milk. Eating meat, especially ground beef that has not been cooked sufficiently to kill E. coli O157:H7



can cause infection. Among other known sources of infection are consumption of sprouts, lettuce, salami, unpasteurized milk and juice, and swimming in or drinking sewage-contaminated water.



Bacteria in diarrheal stools of infected persons can be passed from one person to another if hygiene or handwashing habits are inadequate.



I think I have symptoms of E. coli O157:H7. What should I do?



If you had traveled to an epidemic area within ten days before the onset of symptoms of E. coli O157:H7 infection, consult your local hospital and inform the doctor of your travel history or recent contact with farm animals.

