

## 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:

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# *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.