



Main Symptoms

Symptoms vary from a watery diarrhoea, nausea and abdominal pain to bloody diarrhoea and severe abdominal cramps, usually without fever. About 10% of patients develop haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS) following infection.

Incubation Period (time between infection and onset of symptoms)

2 to 10 days, usually 3 to 5 days.

Duration of illness

Usually within 2 weeks unless complications such as HUS develop.

Where E.coli O157 are found

E.coli O157, like many other harmless types of E. coli, are found in the stomach and intestine of animals. E.coli O157 has been found in 8.6% of cattle in Scotland, but it should be assumed all cattle carry E.coli O157. It has also been found in a small proportion of pigs, horses, dogs (especially greyhounds), zoo animals (including primates), domestic geese and turkeys. Seagulls, house flies and fruit flies have also carried the bacteria.

The main food vehicles are undercooked meat products, especially burgers and mince. Other foods implicated include raw, or inadequate pasteurised milk, unpasteurised soft cheeses, apple juice, and contaminated water.

How You May Become Infected

Bacteria can get onto your hands, utensils or work surfaces from contaminated foods which can in turn contaminate foods which are ready to eat.

- Bacteria can transfer from raw to cooked foods if not properly separated.
- Bacteria may be transferred to food from infected food handlers if hygiene practices are poor e.g. not washing hands after using the toilet.
- If foods are not cooked adequately, bacteria will not be killed.
- If there is no adequate temperature control bacteria may multiply.

How to Prevent E.Coli O157 Food Poisoning

- Wash hands frequently with warm water and soap, particularly before touching food; and after visiting the toilet, handling raw foods, touching animals and rubbish.
- Wash fruit, vegetables and salad if to be eaten in their raw state, even if pre-washed.
- Thoroughly clean all utensils and work surfaces before use.
- Where possible, use separate areas, utensils and surfaces for the storage and preparation of raw and cooked foods.
- Do not consume raw milk or other raw dairy products.
- Cook all foods thoroughly, particularly meat products such as burgers and mince.
- Store perishable foods under refrigeration below 5°C. Use a thermometer to check the temperature.

*For further advice contact:-* Environmental Health, Clackmannanshire Council, Kilncraigs, Greenside Street, Alloa (Tel. 01259 452534/452541)