

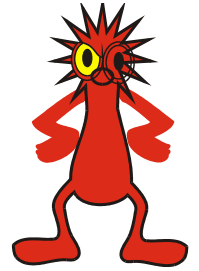


## Escherichia coli (VTEC) (E. coli)

### What is E. coli?

There are many strains of E. coli which are normal and harmless.

E. coli (VTEC) produces a toxin in humans that can breakdown the lining of the intestines. The illness can cause kidney failure and a blood disorder called haemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). It can also cause brain damage and may be fatal.



### Symptoms

It normally takes 2-10 days after eating contaminated food for symptoms to develop and they may include:

- Stomach cramps
- Vomiting
- Mild fever
- Diarrhoea (which may be bloody and severe)
- Kidney failure

Most people recover within 7-10 days, although in severe cases hospital treatment may be necessary.

### How is it spread?

E. coli is found in the intestines of cattle, poultry and less frequently in other animals. It is mainly associated with hamburgers or ground beef. This is due in part to the preparation. The mincing process spreads bacteria that are generally found on the surface of the meat. E. coli has also been found in unpasteurised apple juice/cider and more recently has been associated with visits to farms and camping on land on which cattle have been grazing.



Prevention: Ensuring meat and meat products are thoroughly cooked and there is no cross contamination between cooked and uncooked foods.

### Can I still work?

During the symptoms of E. coli food poisoning, as it is infectious, personal hygiene should be scrupulous and food handling should be avoided. Once the symptoms have ceased and you feel well enough, you may return to work. You should discuss your illness with your manager upon your return



For further information, contact your local Environmental Protection Division, telephone number 01932 838383, or in case of continuing illness, consult your family doctor.