

Frequently Asked Questions about E. Coli

Q. What is E. coli?

A. E. Coli is a bacterium that lives inside the intestines of humans, dogs, and other mammals (most predominantly cattle) and can also be found in produce. E. coli exists to assist in the digestive tract of living organisms, but can prove dangerous when consumed in large quantities.

Q. Is E. coli always dangerous?

A. There are over 60 strains of E. coli; however, very few actually cause illnesses to humans. E. coli exists in the digestive tract of humans to break down food into nutrients that your body can use. The main strain that causes illnesses is called E. coli 0157:H7.

Q. Where do I get the infections and how do I know?

A. When E. Coli enters the blood through ingestion of undercooked meat or some other contaminated food product or water it can potentially cause health problems in humans. The symptoms of an E. coli infection include diarrhea, vomiting, and bad stomach cramps. The symptoms are similar to a 24 hour flu virus or food poisoning.

Q. Should I see a doctor if I think I have E. coli infection?

A. With most cases of E. coli infection, people can recover at home. If you go to a doctor they can run a blood and stool test for the bacteria and will sometimes prescribe an antibiotic. In very rare cases the infection can cause kidney failure.

Q. What should I do if I get an E. coli infection?

A. Never take antidiarrheal medication. That will slow down the process of fighting off the E. coli infection. Recovery from the infection usually takes 5 to 10 days without medication. Always stay hydrated and attempt to keep the spread of the bacteria limited. It becomes increasingly easy to get dehydrated when infected by the bacteria. Washing your hands is also extremely important for keeping the spread of the bacteria down.

Q. What is a safe level of E. coli in water for people to swim in?

A. The highest allowable amount of E. coli bacterium in fresh water is 235/100ml. This means that if in 100 milliliters of water there are less than or equal to 235 E. coli bacteria then it is safe to swim.