

## E.coli

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- **Update (7-28-17, 1pm):** The investigation of the *E. coli* outbreak in the Hildale/Colorado City area is drawing to a close. It has been determined that the likely source of the disease was infected animals, followed by person-to-person contact. Several livestock tested positive for the *E. coli* strain involved in this outbreak. Their owners have been contacted and given guidance to prevent further spread. Tests on water systems, springs, ground beef, produce, and dairy products were negative. There have been no new confirmed cases linked to this outbreak since July 9<sup>th</sup>, although public health agencies will continue to monitor disease activity in the community.

Disease outbreaks are unpredictable and can occur in any community. This effort has involved the Southwest Utah Public Health Department, Mohave County Department of Public Health, Utah Department of Health, Arizona Department of Health Services, and

the CDC. Hundreds of samples were tested and many people were interviewed.

We appreciate the cooperation of the people of Hildale, Colorado City, and Centennial Park with the investigation and their efforts to protect against future outbreaks.

As a reminder, *E. coli* are common bacteria which can be spread to people when tiny pieces of feces enter the mouth through unwashed hands; contaminated soil, water, and food. Undercooked ground beef and unpasteurized dairy products are especially high risk. Infected animals and manure are also sources of infection. Most types of *E. coli* are harmless, but some strains are harmful to humans, such as the strain found in this outbreak (*E. coli* O157:H7).

Health officials continue to encourage following the practices listed below to help prevent infection from *E. coli* and other diseases:

- Keep sick animals separated from people and consider consulting a veterinarian
- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water
  - After contact with animals or exposure to animal feces
  - Before and after preparing or eating food
  - After using the bathroom and changing diapers

- Before touching anything that enters an infant's mouth
- Wash produce thoroughly
- Keep raw food separate from cooked food
- Carefully clean all surfaces and objects that have touched raw meat
- Cook meats thoroughly. Ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160 degrees (use a meat thermometer)

For more information about *E. coli* and preventing infection, visit:

[cdc.gov/ecoli/general](http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/general)

[<http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/general>]

[cdc.gov/handwashing](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing)

[<http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing>]

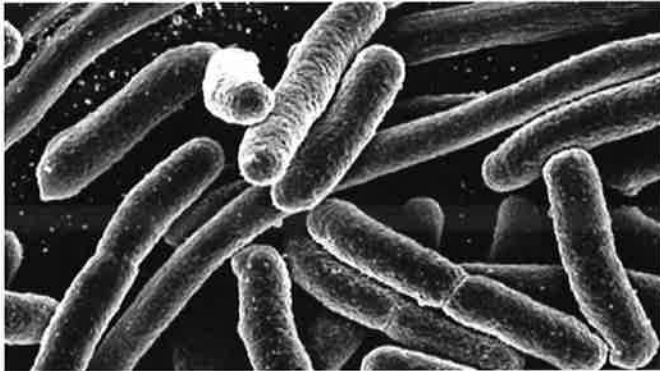
**Link to archived updates**

[<https://swuhealth.org/wp-admin/post.php?post=1681&action=edit>]

- **Link** [<https://swuhealth.org/e-coli-precautions-family-members-sick/>] to *E. coli* precautions for individuals (or family members) who are sick
- **Link** [<http://swuhealth.blogspot.com/2017/07/ecoli-illness-outbreak.html>] to news release (7-3-16) regarding *E. coli* outbreak

### What is *E. coli* and how is it spread?

- *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) are bacteria commonly found in the environment, foods, and the feces of people and animals.
- *E. coli* can be spread through unwashed hands, contaminated food (like undercooked



ground beef or unpasteurized food), water, animal exposure, and soil (where it can remain for several months).

- People can become infected when they swallow tiny particles of infected human or animal feces which contain *E. coli*

### What happens if people are infected?

- Most types of *E. coli* are harmless, but some strains can make people sick.
- The type involved in this outbreak is called *E. coli* O157:H7.
- Symptoms usually begin 3-4 days after exposure to the bacteria and include severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), and vomiting.
- Most people recover within a week without treatment. Some people with *E. coli* O157:H7 develop a life-threatening complication called

Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS), which can cause kidney failure.

- HUS is more common in children younger than 5 years of age and older adults, although people any age can be affected.

### **When should people seek medical care?**

- Contact your healthcare provider if you have diarrhea that lasts for more than three days or is accompanied by fever, blood in the stool, or severe vomiting.
- Seek emergency medical care if you experience any of these HUS symptoms following a diarrheal illness: urinating less often; fatigue; pale skin; or small, unexplained bruises or bleeding from the nose and mouth.

### **How can *E. coli* infection be prevented?**

- Always wash your hands with warm, soapy water
  - Before and after preparing or eating food.
  - After using the bathroom and changing diapers.
  - After contact with animals or their environments where there is exposure to animal feces.
  - Before preparing or touching anything that enters an infant's mouth.
- Use hand-sanitizer if soap and water is not available.

- Don't allow raw food to touch cooked food.  
Don't use the same cutting board or plate.  
Carefully clean countertops, dishes, and  
utensils which have touched raw meat with  
hot, soapy water.
- Cook meats thoroughly. Ground beef should  
be cooked to an internal temperature of 165  
degrees. Pork should be cooked to an internal  
temperature of 145 degrees. Use a meat  
thermometer.
- Avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk  
and unpasteurized dairy products/juices.
- Don't swallow water when swimming

For more information, visit:

**Mohave County Department of Public Health**

[<https://www.mohavecounty.us/ContentPage.aspx?id=1271>] (or [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/Mohave-County-Department-of-Public-Health-1566710160271535/)  
[<https://www.facebook.com/Mohave-County-Department-of-Public-Health-1566710160271535/>])

**Utah Department of Health**

[<http://health.utah.gov/epi/diseases/ecoli/>]

**Arizona Department of Health Services**

[<http://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/foodborne/index.php#stec>]

**CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**

[<https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/general/index.html>]

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