

## Information about E.coli 0157:H7

### PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

#### Useful websites

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.sunderland.nhs.uk/chs](http://www.sunderland.nhs.uk/chs)

This information was correct at the time of printing. While the Trust makes every reasonable effort to keep its information leaflets up to date, very recent changes may not yet be reflected in the guidance and you should discuss this with the clinical staff at the time of your appointment.

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Information Prevention and Control Department

Sunderland Royal Hospital



- Asking the ward manager, a Matron or a member of your healthcare team
- Asking to speak to one of the Infection Prevention and Control Team
- Visiting or contacting the Patient advice and Liaison service based on B floor near to main reception (telephone no. 5699855)

### What is E.coli O157?

- E.coli O157 stands for *Escherichia coli* O157:H7. It is a variety of one of the hundreds of strains of the E.coli bacterium (germ). Most strains of E coli bacteria are harmless and live in our intestines and the intestines of animals.
- The E.coli O157 strain produces a powerful toxin and can cause severe illness.

### What illnesses are caused by E.coli O157?

- E.coli can cause a range of symptoms from mild to severe bloody diarrhoea (this is sometimes called haemorrhagic colitis) and stomach pains. It can sometimes lead to a complication called Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome that affects the normal way in which your kidneys work.
- Children and the elderly are more at risk and symptoms usually resolve within two weeks except in severe cases.

### How do you become infected with E.coli O157?

A small dose of the bacteria can give you the above symptoms. It is mainly found in the intestines of healthy cattle, sometimes sheep and other animals.

You can become infected by:

- Eating contaminated food, in particular mince meat, often in the form of a beef-burger that has not been cooked thoroughly (as the meat can become contaminated during slaughter and bacteria mixed into it when it is ground up.)
- Drinking contaminated milk (bacteria in cows udders/on equipment may get into raw milk.)
- Eating other foods such as yoghurt, cooked meat, meat pies, cheese, raw vegetables, un-pasteurised apple juice and water.
- Direct contact with animals.
- Drinking or bathing in water that has become contaminated by sewage.

- Person to person spread in families/day centres and healthcare settings.

### How is it treated?

Most people recover completely without the need for any specific treatment. People who develop complications may require part of their bowel removed and sometimes breathing and/ or kidney support. This treatment is usually carried out in an Intensive Care Unit / Kidney Dialysis Unit. If complications develop then some people are left needing kidney dialysis.

### Admission to Hospital

- On admission to hospital you will be admitted to a single room in order to help prevent the spread of E.coli O157 to others. An Infection Control Nurse or an Environmental Health Officer will visit you and ask you any questions about what food you might have eaten/where you might have visited 48 hours before your symptoms began. It is important that you let them know if you work as a food handler or within a healthcare setting as this will determine when you are well enough to go back to work.
- A stool specimen will be required to help the doctor confirm that you have an E.coli O157 infection. We sometimes ask for stool samples from other members of your family even if they do not have an infection.

### How can you help yourself from becoming infected?

- Avoid spreading harmful bacteria in your kitchen by:
  - **Not** using the same chopping board/ cooking utensils for handling raw food then cooked food without washing with hot soapy water and thoroughly drying them.
  - **Not** handling raw food then cooked food without washing your hands.

2.

- **Not** placing cooked meats on unwashed plates that have had raw meat on them.
- **Cooking** meat products thoroughly e.g. burgers should be cooked until juices run clear (it is a good idea to use a food thermometer to ensure the thickest part of the burger reaches 160°F.)
- **Sending** what appears to be uncooked food back to the kitchen if you are eating out. If it is a burger, ask for a new bun and clean plate.
- **Washing** and drying fruit and vegetables thoroughly.
- **Drink** only treated water and pasteurised milk and juices.
- **Pay** attention to careful washing and drying of your hands when you have been to the toilet/changed a nappy.
- **Wash** your hands when you have been working in the garden.

If anyone you know has diarrhoea then advise them to wash their hands carefully when they have been to the toilet.

If you have had diarrhoea avoid:

- Using public swimming pools
- Sharing baths
- Preparing food for others

### On discharge from hospital

- You can eat out in cafes/restaurants.
- You will be able to go on holiday once your symptoms are settled.
- Remember to perform careful hand washing.

The environmental Health Officer will let you know when you can go back to work if you are a food handler.

### Where can I get additional advice and information?

This leaflet might not cover all the questions you might have. If this is the case you can get further information by:

3.