

Be Aware of the Signs and Symptoms of E. Coli

What is Escherichia coli (E. coli) 0157:H7 infection?

E. coli are bacteria that normally live in the intestines of humans and animals. Although most strains of this bacteria are harmless, several are known to produce toxins that can cause diarrhea. One particular E. coli strain called 0157:H7 can cause severe diarrhea and kidney damage.

Who gets E. coli 0157:H7 infection?

Anyone of any age can become infected with E. coli 0157:H7, but children and the elderly are more likely to develop serious complications.

How does one get infected with E. coli 0157:H7?

The bacteria are acquired by eating food containing the bacteria. The bacteria live in the intestines of some healthy cattle, and contamination of the meat may occur in the slaughtering process. Eating meat that is rare or inadequately cooked is the most common way of getting the infection. Infection can also occur after consuming foods such as lettuce, alfalfa sprouts, salami, and unpasteurized milk, juice or cider. Person-to-person transmission can occur if infected people do not wash their hands after using the toilet.

What are the symptoms of E. coli 0157:H7 infection?

People infected by E. coli 0157:H7 can develop a range of symptoms. Some infected people may have mild diarrhea or no symptoms at all. Most identified cases develop severe diarrhea and abdominal cramps. Blood is often seen in the stool. Usually little or no fever is present.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The symptoms usually appear about three days after exposure, with a range of one to nine days.

How can infection with E. coli 0157:H7 be prevented?

Be sure to wash your hands after with soap after using the toilet or changing diapers. Do not eat undercooked hamburger or other ground beef products. Cook all ground beef and hamburger thoroughly. Make sure the cooked meat is brown throughout (not pink), and the juices run clear. Drink only pasteurized milk, juice or cider. Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly, especially those that will not be cooked. Children under five years, immunocompromised persons, and the elderly should avoid eating alfalfa sprouts to reduce the risk of spreading the disease.

**If you or someone you know are experiencing these signs or symptoms,
please contact your physician and the Livingston County
Department of Health at 243-7299.**

Health Alert (2)

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Increase in Influenza A H3N2v Virus Infections in Three U.S. States

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, multiple infections with new or variant influenza A (H3N2v) viruses have been identified in 4 states (Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio) in recent weeks. A number of human infections with a new or variant influenza A have been detected in the United States since August 2011. These are viruses that do not usually infect people but occur in pigs and are very different from seasonal flu.

More than half of the recent infections with H3N2v have occurred after contact with pigs, but in some cases, the virus seems to have spread from person-to-person. So far spread has not continued beyond one or two people. The symptoms and severity of H3N2v illness have been similar to seasonal flu.

As contact with animals, especially pigs may occur at county fairs and in other situations, the Livingston County Department of Health recommends the following precautions:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and running water before and after exposure to animals.
- Never eat, drink or put things in your mouth in animal areas.
- Children younger than 5 years, people 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people with certain chronic medical conditions (like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, and neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions) are at high risk from serious complications if they get influenza. These people should consider avoiding exposure to pigs and swine barns, especially if sick pigs have been identified.
- If you have animals – including swine – watch them for signs of illness and call a veterinarian if you suspect they might be sick.
- Avoid close contact with animals that look or act ill, when possible, and
- Avoid contact with pigs if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms.

If you must come in contact with pigs while you are sick, or if you must come in contact with pigs known or suspected to be infected, or their environment, you should use appropriate protective measures (for example, wear protective clothing, gloves, masks that cover your mouth and nose, and other personal protective equipment) and practice good respiratory and hand hygiene.

If you have flu symptoms (see below) after recently coming in contact with a pig the CDC recommends contacting your physician; be sure to tell the physician about your exposure.

Flu signs and symptoms usually include fever and respiratory symptoms, such as cough and runny nose, and possibly other symptoms, such as body aches, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

- If you have flu symptoms, please follow these recommendations from the CDC below:
 1. If you have symptoms of flu and are very sick or worried about your illness contact your health care provider.
 2. Also, whenever you have flu symptoms and are seeing a health care provider, always remember to tell them if you have asthma, diabetes, heart disease, neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions, are pregnant, or are older than 65 or younger than 5 years. These conditions and age factors put you at high risk of serious complications if you have the flu.

Health care providers will determine whether influenza testing and possible treatment are needed. For more information on seasonal flu please visit www.livingstoncounty.us/doh.htm

Please contact the Livingston County Department of Health at 585-243-7299 or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/h3n2v-factsheet.htm> to find out more about Influenza A (H3N2v).

