



Fact Sheet

Enteropathogenic Escherichia Coli (EPEC / E. Coli)

What is Enteropathogenic *Escherichia coli* (EPEC)?

Escherichia coli (*E. Coli*) is a normal part of the human intestine. Most people normally carry harmless strains of *E. coli* in their intestines. Both the harmless strains and those that cause diarrhea are acquired largely through ingestion of contaminated food or water. Person-to-person and animal-to-human transmission occur through the oral-fecal route.

What are the symptoms of EPEC?

Symptoms usually appear within 3 to 4 days of consuming a portion of food or drink that contains the bacteria, although this could be as short as 1 day or as long as 10 days. Most individuals begin to feel better within 5 to 7 days. Contact your healthcare provider if you are experiencing symptoms or your symptoms begin to worsen.

Symptoms may include:

- Stomach cramps
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Low-grade fever (less than 101° F)

How is EPEC spread?

Transmission occurs when an ill person does not wash their hands after using the bathroom and then touching surfaces contaminating them with the bacteria. Touching these contaminated surfaces with hands and then eating puts one at high risk of getting infected. The minimum incubation period, or the time from exposure to onset of illness, can be as little as a few hours to a maximum of 34 hours, with the typical time being 12 hours.

What is the treatment for EPEC?

Supportive therapy is very important. Antibiotics and antidiarrheal agents should not be used. These treatments might increase the chances of Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS). Staying well-hydrated is the main remedy to prevent

dehydration. Contact your doctor if you cannot keep fluids down or if diarrhea lasts for a prolonged period of time.

How can EPEC be prevented?

- Wash your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom and changing diapers
- Wash your hands thoroughly before, during, and after preparing food
- Wash your hands thoroughly after contact with animals, their environment, or their food
- Wash your hands thoroughly before preparing and feeding bottles or foods to an infant or toddler, before touching an infant or toddler's mouth, or before touching pacifiers or other things that go into an infant or toddler's mouth.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based cleanser with at least 60% alcohol.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly with running water
- Cook animal products thoroughly
- Thoroughly wash hands, cutting boards, knives, countertops, and utensils to prevent cross-contamination between animal products and other foods.
- Avoid unpasteurized dairy products
- Avoid swallowing water when swimming in natural waters, swimming pools, or backyard "kiddie" pools.

How do I get more information on EPEC?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: 269-969-6383



www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

Website: www.cdc.gov/ecoli/general/index.html

Spanish: www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/e-coli/symptoms-causes/syc-20372058

E Coli EPEC

Updated 8/29/23

This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.