

Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC)

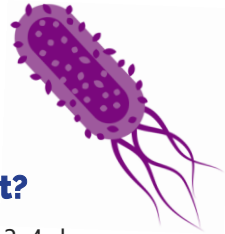


Infectious Disease
Epidemiology &
Prevention Division

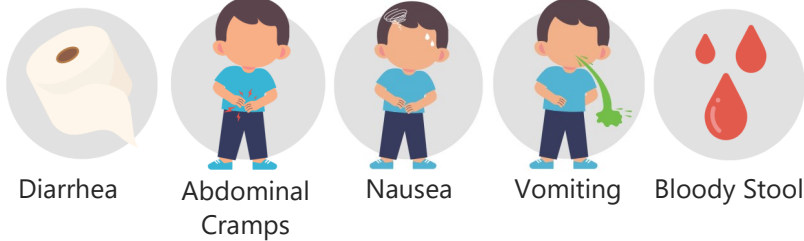
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What is STEC?

E. coli is a bacterium that most healthy animals and humans have in their intestines. There are many strains that exist, and most are harmless. However, some are harmful to people, like Shiga toxin producing *E. coli*, including *E. coli* O157:H7. This strain has the potential to cause severe and contagious illnesses with a rare possibility of leading to Hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS).



What are the symptoms?



How long do symptoms last?

- Symptoms typically start within 3-4 days after exposure, but can take longer
- Symptoms can last 5-10 days and may vary from person to person
- An infected person can pass the bacteria in their stool for approximately three weeks after symptoms have stopped

Who is most at risk?

Young children, senior adults, pregnant women, and immune suppressed individuals are at higher risk of becoming sick.

How is STEC treated?

Most people recover without medical treatment. Avoid the use of antibiotics or over-the-counter anti-diarrheal medication as they may increase the risk of developing HUS. Contact your doctor to discuss treatment options.

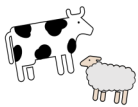
How do I know if I have STEC?

If symptoms persist beyond 24 hours, or if there is bloody stool, seek immediate medical attention. A doctor or healthcare provider can collect a stool sample to test for Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*.

How does it spread?



Eating foods that are contaminated with feces from animals, the environment, or from cross-contamination while cooking or preparing meals.



Touching, petting, or handling animals or their environments



Some infections occur when the bacteria passes from the stool or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another person through direct contact



Swallowing water while swimming or drinking water contaminated with STEC bacteria

How is STEC prevented?

1

Wash your hands with soap and water especially before preparing or eating foods.

2

Practice food safety by avoiding cross contamination, wash, cook, and store foods properly.

3

If you are sick, do not handle, prepare, or cook food for others.

4

Avoid swallowing water from ponds, lakes, and untreated swimming pools.



For more information, visit the Indiana Department of Health [STEC webpage](#).

