

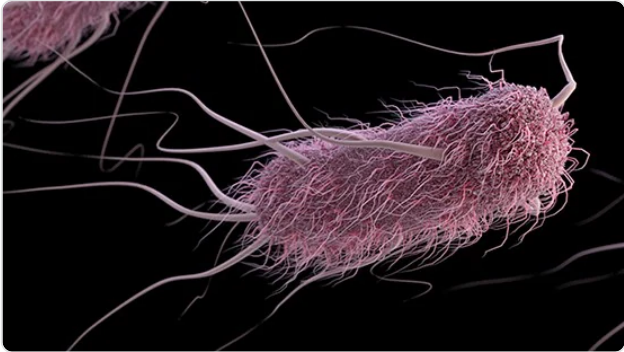


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About *Escherichia coli* Infection

KEY POINTS

- *E. coli* are bacteria found in many places like the intestines of people and animals.
- Most kinds of *E. coli* are harmless, but some can make you sick.
- This site focuses on the kinds of *E. coli* that cause diarrhea.



Overview

E. coli are germs called bacteria. They are found in many places, including in the environment, foods, water, and the intestines of people and animals.

Most *E. coli* are harmless and are part of a healthy intestinal tract. *E. coli* help us digest food, produce vitamins, and protect us from harmful germs.

But some *E. coli* can make people sick with diarrhea, urinary tract infections, pneumonia, sepsis, and other illnesses. This website focuses on the [kinds of *E. coli*](#) that cause diarrhea.

People can get infected after swallowing *E. coli*.

This can happen through contaminated food or water or contact with animals, environments, or other people.

Some people are more likely to get infected.

Groups of people who are at [increased risk](#) for *E. coli* infection include:

- Children younger than 5
- Adults 65 and older
- People with weakened immune systems
- International travelers

E. coli infection can be serious.

Infection with Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) can lead to a serious health condition called [hemolytic uremic syndrome](#) (HUS). HUS can lead to kidney failure, permanent health problems, and even death.

E. coli infection can be prevented.

The good news is that you can [take steps](#) to help keep yourself and your family safe.

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

[National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases \(NCEZID\)](#)