Fact Sheet

Enteropathogenic Escherichia Coli (EPEC / E-Coli)

What is 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 intestine. 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 is through the oral-fecal route.

What are the symptoms of EPEC?
Infections caused by EPEC are difficult to differentiate from those with other causes. Symptoms include watery diarrhea, sometimes accompanied by low-grade fever and vomiting. EPEC infection may be severe; vomiting may make oral rehydration difficult.

How is EPEC spread?
Transmission occurs when an ill person does not wash their hands after using the bathroom touching surfaces that then become contaminated with the bacteria. Touching these contaminated surfaces with hands and then eating puts one at high risk of getting infected. 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?
There is usually no treatment needed for EPEC unless the person is immunocompromised or has a severe case of EPEC. An antibiotic may be given in those cases. Staying well hydrated is the main remedy to prevent dehydration. Contact your doctor if you cannot keep fluids down or the diarrhea lasts for a prolonged period of time.

How can EPEC be prevented?
Always wash your hands with soap and water prior to eating anything to prevent disease.
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:

E Coli EPEC
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