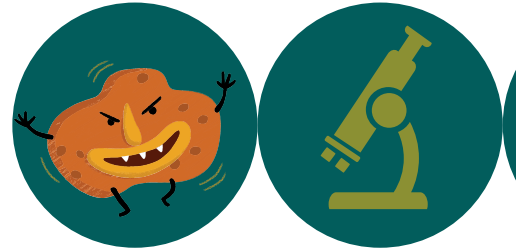


Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) - Fast Facts



E. coli are a group of bacteria that is **commonly found in the gut of humans and other warm-blooded animals**. Most strains of *E. coli* are harmless and do not cause illness, however there are some like Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) that can make people unwell.

You can become ill from STEC by eating contaminated foods, drinking contaminated water, by direct contact with farm animals (faeces and their environment) or from another infected person.

Which foods can it be found in?

- Raw and undercooked meats
- Raw vegetables and salads
- Unpasteurised dairy products
- Untreated water

Who can contract STEC?

Anyone can become ill from STEC but there is a higher rate of illness in young children.

Symptoms of STEC

Diarrhoea (often watery or bloody), stomach pain, high temperature and vomiting. Some cases can have serious complications including developing haemolytic-uraemic syndrome which can lead to kidney failure and, in severe cases, death.

Duration of illness

Average seven days.

How common is it?

Each year there are around **250 laboratory confirmed cases of STEC** reported in Scotland.

How you can reduce the risk of getting ill from STEC

- Avoid spreading germs – make sure hands are cleaned with soap and hot water. Utensils and surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned before use and after touching raw meat.
- Keep raw meat and ready-to-eat foods separate
 - use different chopping boards and utensils or wash between uses. Cover raw meat and store at the bottom of the fridge so juices cannot drip onto other foods.
- Check it's cooked – cooking kills harmful germs so make sure meat products such as burgers, sausages, kebabs and rolled joints are cooked through until steaming hot with no pink meat and juices run clear. Or use a food thermometer to check food is 75°C or above in the thickest part.
- Wash vegetables, fruit and salad.

If you think you have food poisoning, contact your GP or call NHS 24 on 111

More information

For more information on food safety at home and when you're eating out, visit:
www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/food-safety

Find out more about STEC visit:
www.foodstandards.gov.scot/ecoli-fact-sheet

If you have any questions about the information on this page, please contact:
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