



Public Health Information Factsheet

Director
202-513-7217

Assistant Director
202-513-7226

National Capital
202-619-7070

Northeast
978-970-5033

Southeast
404-562-3124
x697

Midwest
402-221-3786

InterMountain
303-969-2922

Desert Southwest
505-988-6040

Pacific West/Pacific
Islands/Alaska
510-817-1375
206-220-4270

Web Resources

NPS Public Health:

http://www.nps.gov/public_health/

CDC:

<http://www.cdc.gov>

State and Local Health Departments:

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/international/relres.html>

E. COLI - FOODBORNE ILLNESSES

Escherichia coli 0157:H7 (*E. coli*), an emerging source of foodborne illness, causes an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 cases of infections in the United States each year. Although no cases have yet been reported in the NPS, the potential is growing for such infections and park staffs should be aware of its causes and consequences.

Typical symptoms include abdominal cramping, diarrhea and bloody stools. Occasionally this infection results in kidney failure, causing over 150 deaths per year, primarily among children under 5 years of age and the elderly.

Most illness has been associated with eating undercooked, contaminated ground beef at restaurants and in homes. Infection has also occurred after drinking raw apple juice or milk and after swimming in or ingesting sewage- contaminated waters.

A small percentage of cattle are infected with *E. coli*. The organism can become thoroughly mixed within meat during grinding from beef contaminated during slaughter. *E. coli* present on cow's udders and milking equipment can contaminate milk. The organism can also be spread from contaminated hands.

Infections from this strain of *E. coli* can be prevented by:

- Thoroughly cooking ground beef (155°F for 15 seconds). The cooked meat should be gray or brown throughout (not pink) and the juices should run clear.
- Washing and sanitizing utensils after contact with raw ground beef.
- Washing hands carefully and frequently with soap to reduce risk of spreading *E. coli* infections (and other infections) from the sick to the healthy.
- Consuming only pasteurized apple juice and milk and milk products.

Reference:

Health Information, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services.

If you have any questions, please contact a Regional Public Health Consultant, park sanitarian or call WASO Public Health for more information at 202-513-7226.

###