

FOOD SAFETY INFORMATION

Manufacturers of food products
Retailers of food products
General Public

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Warning on the potential risk of *Escherichia coli* infection by consuming contaminated food

1. OVERVIEW

Escherichia coli (abbreviated as *E. coli*) are bacteria found in the environment, foods, and intestines of people and animals. Some kinds of *E. coli* can cause severe gastrointestinal illness such as diarrhea, while others cause urinary tract infections, respiratory illness and pneumonia. Some strains such as Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) can be life threatening. Human beings can get *Escherichia coli* infection from a variety of sources, including:

- Drinking water that has been contaminated by feces,
- Being in contact with the feces of humans or stool of animals,
- Consuming contaminated foods, such as raw or undercooked ground meat products, raw milk, and contaminated raw vegetables and sprouts.

2. SYMPTOMS OF ESCHERCHIA COLI INFECTION

Symptoms of *E. coli* infection usually begin three or four days after exposure to the bacteria. They include stomach pains and cramps, diarrhea that may range from watery to bloody, fatigue, loss of appetite or nausea, and vomiting.

Some infections can cause severe bloody diarrhea and lead to life-threatening conditions, such as a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) or the development of high blood pressure, chronic kidney disease and neurologic problems.

3. PREVENTION

The important things you can do to protect yourself and your family against *E. coli* infection are:

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- ✓ Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and running water before you prepare food, before preparing bottles or food for infants or toddlers, before touching anything that goes into a child's mouth, after you've used the bathroom or changed a diaper, after you've had contact with animals, even your own pets and after handling raw meat.
- ✓ Follow the four steps to food safety when preparing food: clean, separate, cook, and chill.
- ✓ Use a food thermometer to make sure meat has reached a safe minimum cooking temperature.
- ✓ Cook ground beef, pork, and lamb to an internal temperature of at least 160°F (70°C). The best way to check the temperature of patties is to insert the thermometer from the side until it reaches the center.
- ✓ Cook steaks and roasts of beef to an internal temperature of at least 145°F (62.6°C) and allow the meat to rest for 3 minutes after you remove it from the grill or stove. Check the temperature in the thickest part of steaks or roasts.
- ✓ Do not drink untreated water or swallow water when swimming or playing in lakes, ponds, streams, swimming pools, and backyard "kiddie" pools.
- ✓ Drink pasteurized milk, juice and cider.

Advice for Home kitchen, Retailers and Manufacturers of food products

- **Wash:** Clean knives, counters, and cutting boards with hot, soapy water after raw meat has touched them.
- **Keep raw and cooked separate:** Use different cutting boards for food that you eat raw, such as vegetables and fruit. Do not put cooked meat back on the same plate you used for raw meat without washing the plate first.
- **Wash hands** with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw foods and after the cleaning and sanitation process.
- **Wash** the inside walls and shelves of the refrigerator, cutting boards, countertops, and utensils that may have contacted contaminated foods; then sanitize them with a solution of one tablespoon of chlorine bleach to one gallon of hot water; dry with a clean cloth or paper towel that has not been previously used.
- **Wash and sanitize** display cases and surfaces used to potentially store, serve, or prepare potentially contaminated foods.
- **Conduct regular frequent cleaning and sanitizing** of cutting boards and utensils used in processing to help minimize the likelihood of cross-contamination.

Sincerely,



Dr. Emile BIENVENU
Director General

REFERENCES

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