

How can E. coli infections be prevented?

E. coli infections cannot always be completely prevented, however, you can reduce the risk of getting an infection by:

- Washing your hands after using the toilet
- Washing your hands before preparing and eating food
- Washing your hands before touching a catheter or changing the bag
- Not touching catheters, Intravenous lines or open wounds unnecessarily
- Women should wipe front to back after going to the toilet
- Keeping hydrated. Drink plenty of fluid each day.



Help us get it right

If you have a complaint, concern, comment or compliment please let us know by speaking to a member of our staff. We learn from your feedback and use the information to improve and develop our services.

If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on **0113 220 8585**, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm or email lch.pet@nhs.net

We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages on request.

Contact us

Community Infection Prevention and Control Team

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Tel: 0113 843 4511

Hospital Infection Prevention and Control Team

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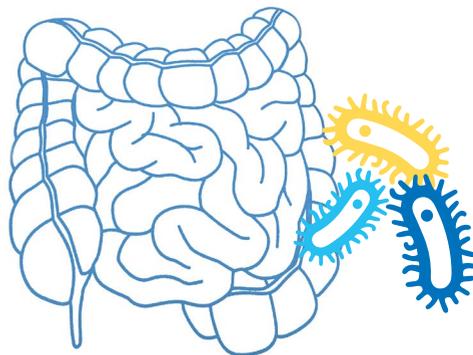
E. coli



Information for patients

What is E. coli?

Escherichia Coli (E. coli) is a bacteria that can be found in the bowel of most people. E. coli does not cause any problems when it's there, but can cause infections if it gets in to new areas such as cuts, scratches or urinary catheter sites. An E. coli infection can cause serious illness which will need medical treatment.



How is E. coli spread?

E. coli is excreted from the body in faeces. If you do not wash your hands properly after going to the toilet the bacteria can spread around the house and across your body via your hands.

If the bacteria is spread to wounds or scratches, catheter sites or other open passages it could cause an infection.

You can also infect others when you touch them or if they touch a surface you have spread the bacteria to.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can pick up an E. coli infection, and this is usually self transmitted (caused by the bugs in your bowel). However, you are more at risk of an E. coli infection if you:

- Are an older person
- Have diabetes
- Become dehydrated
- Have a urinary catheter
- Have an intravenous device (PICC or Hickman Line - you'll know what these are if you have one)
- Have gallbladder or kidney stones
- Have an enlarged prostate or other prostate problems.

What are the signs and symptoms of E. coli infections?

Symptoms of and E. coli infection can be different depending on where the infection is. If the E. coli has entered your blood and caused a blood stream infection (bacteraemia) some of the main symptoms are: a very high temperature, shivers and chills, not passing urine all day, being more confused than usual, and your symptoms not getting better or getting worse within two days of starting antibiotics.



Bacteraemia can only be diagnosed through a blood test.

How is E. coli treated?

If your doctor or nurse thinks you may have an E. coli infection they will take a sample from the infection area (e.g. urine sample, wound swab). You may be then prescribed antibiotics to treat the infection.



Can the infection come back?

E. coli lives quite normally in your bowel so it is impossible to get rid of it completely. However, if E. coli spreads to another area and infects it, you may need antibiotics to treat it. Having an E. coli infection does not give you immunity, so if it gets into an area where it should not be again, you may need more treatment.

Remember:

Always complete the antibiotic course you are given. If you do not complete the course, the infection may not have completely cleared, could come back and the antibiotic may not work.