

Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC)



What is STEC?



- Most E. coli bacteria are harmless and a helpful part of our digestive system.
- However, Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC) is a bacteria that can cause infection.
- STEC lives and can be commonly found in our environment, animals, or contaminated food or water.

Who can get a STEC infection?

It only takes a small amount of STEC bacteria to make you sick and anyone can get sick from it.

People can get STEC from:

- eating raw or undercooked meats (or eating something that touched it)
- eating un-washed fruits or vegetables
- drinking untreated water
- drinking raw (unpasteurized) milk
- contact with animals (farms, petting zoos, fairs)
- accidental consumption of recreational water (pools, lakes, rivers)

Symptoms of STEC infection:

Symptoms usually start 3-4 days after exposure, and usually last about 5-7 days.

Symptoms include:

- Diarrhea that can be bloody
- Stomach cramps or pain
- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting



What to do if you have symptoms:



Contact your health provider if you have concerns or questions about your health, especially if you have bloody diarrhea or severe stomach cramping. They may ask you to submit a stool (poop) sample to diagnose STEC.

Tell your healthcare provider if you have other medical conditions or a weakened immune system (such as HIV infection or from chemotherapy treatment) because you may be more likely to become severely ill.

How to decrease your chance of getting a STEC infection:

The best way to decrease your chance of infection is to practice good hygiene.

-Wash your hands often, especially:

- after using the bathroom
- before, during, and after preparing food
- after touching feces (poop) or garbage
- after contact with animals



-Cook all meats all the way.

-Keep raw meats away from other foods.

-Wash all fruits and vegetables.

-Do NOT drink untreated water or unpasteurized milk.

Treatment:



There is no specific medication, cure, or vaccine for a STEC infection and most people recover without medical treatment.

People with a STEC infection should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Dehydration can cause serious issues and may lead to hospitalization.

If you have severe symptoms like diarrhea lasting more than 3 days, fever over 102° F, bloody diarrhea, or severe vomiting, contact your healthcare provider to discuss treatment options.