

What kind of infection is it?

E. coli is a bacteria that normally lives in the intestines of most people and most types are harmless. Enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (or ETEC) is a special kind of *E. coli* that produces a toxin that causes watery diarrhea.

How do people get infected?

- ETEC infections are caused by exposure to food, ice, or water contaminated with human or animal waste.
- ETEC is common in developing and tropical countries and is often associated with travel.
- ETEC infections do occur in people who have not traveled recently.

What are the usual symptoms?

- Illness usually starts 1-3 days after exposure.
- Watery diarrhea, stomach pain, or cramps. Fever, headache, and vomiting can also occur.

How long does it last?

- Typically 3-4 days but may be longer.

How is it treated?

- Prevent dehydration by drinking fluids. For young children, use a rehydration solution such as Pedialyte® or Rehydralyte®. Even a few sips or spoonfuls at a time can help. Sometimes anti-nausea medicines or IV hydration may be necessary if you or your child cannot keep down any fluids. Warning signs of dehydration include dry mouth, decreased urination, or dizziness.
- Bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol) for children 12 years and older can help.
- Antibiotics may shorten the duration of diarrhea for people with ETEC infection but often are not necessary.

Are there possible complications?

- Dehydration from fluid loss is the major complication.

Comments:

- When traveling, you can help prevent ETEC infection by avoiding untreated water or ice made with untreated water, and eating cooked foods that are served hot.
- Wash hands carefully with soap and water after going to the bathroom or changing diapers, cleaning up vomit or stool.
- Clean contaminated surfaces and disinfect with bleach solution (5-25 tablespoons of household bleach per gallon of water).
- People with diarrhea should not prepare food.

Resources:

- [CDC Handout](#)