
What do I do if I have been notified that my drinking water is *E. coli* positive?



Drinking Water:

- Boil water for a minimum of 1 minute or use bottled water.

Food:



- Wash ready to eat foods, such as fruits and vegetables, in bottled water or water boiled for at least 1 minute.
- Get rid of ice cubes made with contaminated water.



Washing Dishes:

- Wash and rinse dishes with boiled or bottled water and dish soap.
- You can use a dishwasher, as long as the temperature reaches at least 160o F degrees.

Bathing/Showering:



- Adults may continue to shower as long as no water is swallowed.
- Sponge baths are recommended for children instead of tub baths. Use a clean supply of water if possible.
- After you bathe or shower, wash your hands in chlorinated or bottled/boiled water.



Brushing Teeth:

- Use bottled or boiled water.

Additional information can be obtained from the following websites:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ecoli.html>

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/escherichiacoli_g.htm

Connecticut Department of Public Health

Drinking Water Section

E. coli in Drinking Water



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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What is *E. coli* and where does it come from?

- *E. coli* is a type of fecal coliform bacteria commonly found in the intestines of animals humans.
- The presence of *E. coli* in water is a strong of recent sewage or animal waste contamination.
- During rainfalls or snowmelts, *E. coli* may washed into creeks, rivers, streams, lakes, or groundwater.
- When these waters are used as sources of drinking water and the water is not protected, treated or poorly treated, *E. coli* may get into drinking water.
- There are many different strains of *E. coli*. most severe is *E. coli* O157:H7, which makes strong toxin and can cause severe illness.



What are the health effects of an *E. coli* infection ?

- Very few strains of *E. coli* cause disease. However, *E. coli* in a water sample shows recent fecal contamination and this can make you sick.
- Health symptoms related to drinking or swallowing water contaminated with bacteria usually range from no ill effects to cramps and diarrhea.
- Most *E. coli* O157:H7 cases are caused by food contamination, such as ground beef and unpasteurized milk, juice, or cider.



- In rare cases, *E. coli* O157:H7 infections have happened from untreated or poorly treated water.
- *E. coli* O157:H7 infection often causes severe bloody diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea and headaches.
- In some people, mainly children under 5 years of age, the elderly, and people with weak immune systems, the infection can cause hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS).
- HUS causes the red blood cells in the body to be destroyed and the kidneys to fail.
- About 2%-7% of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections lead to HUS.

How long does it take for symptoms to occur?

- Symptoms usually appear within 2-4 days, but can take up to 8 days.
- Most people recover without medicine in 5-10 days.
- Do not take something for diarrhea symptoms, such as Imodium, if you suspect an *E. coli* infection
- Stay hydrated! Drink small sips of bottled water during the whole day to prevent dehydration.
- Talk to a doctor if you have these symptoms and think you may have an *E. coli* infection.
- All people who all of a sudden have diarrhea with blood should get their stool tested for *E. coli* O157:H7.



How do I know my water is safe to drink?

- Systems using surface water, rather than groundwater, need to take extra steps to protect against bacterial contamination because they are out in the open.
 - All public water systems using surface waters must disinfect, which will kill *E. coli* O157:H7.
 - If you get your water from a public water system, then your water system must, by law, notify you if your water is not safe.
 - Your water system may use different forms of boil water notice delivery, which may include radio, television, and hand delivery.
 - They may also post a notice in obvious locations that are visited regularly by persons served by the public water system.
 - To get information about your drinking water, look at your Consumer Confidence Report (CCR), which must be given to consumers by July 1st of every year, or you may call your local water system directly.
 - All public water systems in the State of Connecticut have to meet State and Federal drinking water regulations.
 - A system that operates at least 60 days per year, and serves 25 people or more or has 15 or more service connections, is regulated as a public water system under the Safe Drinking Water Act.
 - Public water systems have to test for coliform bacteria under the Safe Drinking Water Act.
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