



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Two *E. coli* O145 cases confirmed in Alabama

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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In April, two *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O145 cases associated with a multistate outbreak were confirmed in Alabama residents. These two individuals were not hospitalized and both have recovered.

The Alabama Department of Public Health, Epidemiology Division, investigates reports of *E. coli* O145, and continues to look for additional reportable cases. The ADPH Bureau of Clinical Laboratories determined the bacteria strain fingerprint of these cases and forwarded it to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In May, CDC notified Alabama its two *E. coli* O145 cases had matching bacteria strain fingerprints to cases from five other states. The investigation is ongoing at the state and federal level to identify the source of infection.

What is *E. coli*?

- *Escherichia coli* are bacteria that affect the stomach and intestines.
- Most types of *E. coli* are harmless; a few types can make one sick.

How does *E. coli* spread?

- Water-to-Person: Swallowing water while swimming or drinking untreated water.
- Person-to-Person: Caring for sick people with vomiting and diarrhea.
- Food-to-Person: Eating food or drinking liquid handled by a sick person who did not wash his or her hands well, or drinking unpasteurized (raw) milk.
- Surface-to-Person: Touching a surface or object handled by a sick person or within an animal living area, such as a petting zoo, then touching one's mouth.

What are the symptoms?

- Severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), and vomiting.
- If one has fever, it usually is less than 101 degrees F.
- Symptoms usually begin 3-4 days after exposure.
- Most people get better within 5–7 days.
- Severe, even life-threatening, illness is possible for young children, the elderly, and those with health problems.
- Children and pregnant women should take special care to avoid dehydration; consult a health care provider on preventing dehydration.

How do I stop the spread?

- Wash hands thoroughly after using the bathroom, changing diapers, before preparing or eating food, and after contact with animals or their living area.
- Adults and children with diarrhea or loose stools should not be in child-care facilities until their diarrhea has resolved.
- Do not swim for two weeks after the diarrhea has stopped.
- Wash yourself and your child thoroughly with soap and water before swimming.
- Take children on bathroom breaks or check diapers often when swimming.
- Do not change diapers at poolside.
- Do not swallow water when swimming.
- Cook ground beef and meat to at least 160 degrees F and use a thermometer.
- Avoid raw milk, dairy products and juices, like fresh apple cider.
- Prevent cross contamination in food preparation areas by thoroughly washing hands, counters, cutting boards and utensils after touching raw meat.

Anyone with symptoms should contact their health care provider. For more information about *E. coli*, please go to cdc.gov and type *E. coli* in the search box.