



# Consumer Information Sheet




## Reducing the risks of *E.Coli* 0157 transmission

The pathogenic bacteria *E.Coli* requires concerted control when preparing red meat and vegetables at home

The hazard	The risk	How should you control this?
<p><b><u>PURCHASE OF CONTAMINATED FOOD</u></b>  <i>E.Coli</i> 0157 is a pathogenic bacteria originating from soil and the guts of animals that may find its way in to the human food chain via unwashed vegetables or raw meat.</p>	<p><i>E.Coli</i> 0157 is naturally present in the soil and can be found on root vegetables. It may also be present in/on fresh meat contaminated by the bacterium during the slaughter/ butchering/ mincing processes so, <b><u>IT IS ALWAYS BEST TO TREAT ALL SUCH FOODS AS CONTAMINATED.</u></b></p> <p>In extreme cases food borne illness from <i>E.Coli</i> 0157 can be fatal and you should do all you can to prevent its spread to food you intend eating yourself or giving to others.</p>	<p><b>All meat and root vegetables should be sourced from reputable suppliers/retailers to lessen the chance of contamination of these purchased products. Only buy good quality meat and vegetables.</b></p>
<p><b><u>CROSS-CONTAMINATION THROUGH DIRECT PHYSICAL CONTACT BETWEEN FOODS</u></b>  <i>E.Coli</i> 0157 may be easily spread between raw meat /unwashed vegetables onto ready-to-eat foods if they are placed in actual physical contact.</p>	<p>If raw meat/unwashed vegetables are placed in physical contact with ready-to-eat foods* then there is a real-risk of bacterial transfer between them. This could happen during purchase, storage, preparation or display of food. You must prevent cross-contamination between these foods.</p> <p><small>*Ready-to-eat foods are those which may be eaten without further cooking/processing.</small></p> 	<p><b>Ensure that these foods are kept separate and at all times.</b></p>
<p><b><u>CROSS-CONTAMINATION THROUGH COMMON PRACTICES</u></b>  <i>E.Coli</i> 0157 may be easily spread around a home kitchen by normal routine practices. This can result in the bacterium being transferred unintentionally between contaminated food and other objects/equipment/ready-to-eat food.</p>	<p>Very little <i>E.Coli</i> is necessary for human illness (<i>only 1 organism per gram of food</i>) so you must be careful to prevent spread of the organism. You can stop these risks through separation of processes, effective hand washing, disinfection, and the use of separate dedicated equipment for raw foods and ready-to-eat foods.</p>	<p><b>How can you limit/prevent cross contamination in this way?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that food processes are separated enough spatially to prevent the contamination of ready-to-eat foods by foods likely to be contaminated with <i>E.Coli</i>.</li> <li>• Making sure you wash your hands at a wash hand basin using an ant-bacterial soap whenever you have handled raw foods and before you handle any ready-to-eat foods afterwards.</li> <li>• Using food-safe disinfectants which are capable of destroying <i>E.Coli</i> 0157 and you use them as instructed by the manufacture.</li> </ul>

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<p><b><u>CROSS-CONTAMINATION WHEN USING THE SAME SURFACES/EQUIPMENT</u></b>  <i>E.Coli 0157</i> may be spread via surfaces in the home which food handlers come into regular contact with. This is usually done by hand contact.</p>	<p>You should think about all types of surfaces liable to become contaminated by <i>E.Coli 0157</i>. If these are overlooked then contamination can be spread without any way of detecting it.</p> 	<p><b>The following surfaces in your home can become contaminated by <i>E.Coli 0157</i> bacteria: -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clothing</li> <li>• Door handles</li> <li>• Fridge/Freezer handles</li> <li>• Oven handles</li> <li>• Microwave handles</li> <li>• Cupboard handles</li> <li>• Food surfaces</li> <li>• Cutting boards</li> <li>• Window stays and catches</li> <li>• Tap heads</li> <li>• Pens</li> <li>• Gloves</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>CROSS-CONTAMINATION THROUGH USE OF THE SAME AREAS</u></b>  The areas used for the preparation of raw food should ideally be separate from those used for the preparation of ready-to-eat foods – to prevent bacterial contamination.</p>	<p>Strict physical separation of food processes is considered the only reliable way of preventing the spread of <i>E.Coli 0157</i> to ready-to-eat foods.</p>	<p><b>These measures should ideally be taken within your home to prevent cross-contamination: -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use particular equipment and utensils just for raw foods and which are not used for any food which is ready-to-eat</li> <li>• Use particular equipment and utensils just for food which is ready-to-eat and which are not used for any raw foods</li> <li>• Using different colour coded equipment/utensils for raw and ready to eat foods</li> <li>• Preparing raw foods and ready to eat foods using separate surfaces/boards</li> <li>• If you have more than one fridge or freezer then use these to totally separate your raw and ready-to-eat foods.</li> <li>• Ensuring that any work surfaces or cutting boards you use are always cleaned and disinfected before use.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>CROSS-CONTAMINATION VIA DUAL-USE EQUIPMENT</u></b>  The practice of using equipment for 'dual-use' (i.e. for raw food and ready-to-eat food) will increase the risk of <i>E.Coli 0157</i> being transferred on to ready-to-eat food.</p>	<p>The use of 'dual-use' equipment should be avoided. Despite the use of disinfectants these should not be relied upon as being totally effective at removing <i>E.Coli 0157</i> from food equipment. If you can you should therefore designate equipment for either raw or ready-to-eat use only.</p>	<p><b>If you can you should designate these items of equipment that you use for single use only: -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mincing machines</li> <li>• Slicing machines</li> <li>• Rotary mixers</li> <li>• Hand mixers</li> <li>• Cutting boards</li> <li>• Weighing scales</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>CROSS-CONTAMINATION VIA PACKAGING MATERIALS</u></b>  <i>E.Coli 0157</i> may be spread via packaging materials or their re-use.</p>	<p>Where any raw meat or unwashed vegetables are encased in any form of packaging – the packaging must be regarded as contaminated and must not be re-used. All contaminated packaging must be disposed of. Neither can any packaging materials be effectively cleaned or sanitised for re-use.</p>	<p><b>Make sure that when you use the following packaging it is always clean and uncontaminated: -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cling film</li> <li>• Aluminium foil</li> <li>• Plastic bags</li> <li>• Greaseproof paper</li> <li>• Cardboard boxes</li> <li>• Plastic boxes</li> <li>• Box inner liners</li> </ul>

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<p><b><u>CROSS CONTAMINATION VIA SINKS, WASH HAND BASINS AND HANDS</u></b></p> <p><i>E.Coli 0157</i> may be spread if you do not wash your hands between tasks and where care is not taken to disinfect hygienic facilities such as wash hand basins and sinks.</p>	<p>When preparing raw and ready-to-eat foods there is a risk of contamination between them if done at the same time and when moving between these tasks. Effective hand washing must be carried out in-between.</p> <p>Bacteria can live on sink and wash hand basin taps. These must be kept clean and disinfected to prevent bacterial transfer on to cleaned hands.</p> 	<p><b>Many methods can be used to prevent the transfer of <i>E.Coli 0157</i> from raw foods onto ready-to-eat products: -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand washing always before handling/preparing ready-to-eat food</li> <li>• Use of gloves with hand washing in-between each time they are changed</li> <li>• Use of separate gloves for handling raw and ready to eat foods</li> <li>• Regular disinfection of hand operable wash hand basin taps and bowls</li> <li>• Regular disinfection of hand operable sink taps and bowls</li> <li>• Use of disposable paper towels to turn taps on/off between uses</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>CROSS CONTAMINATION VIA INADEQUATE SANITATION/DISINFECTION</u></b><i>E.Coli 0157</i> may be spread through the inadequate disinfection of surfaces, utensils or equipment.</p>	<p>Disinfection must be carried out in a way which is effective in destroying the <i>E.Coli 0157</i> organism. However, disinfection can only accompany separation methods as it cannot be relied upon alone completely to prevent all possible transfer of the organism within the food environment.</p> <p>Sanitisers and disinfectants should be applied only to visibly clean surfaces, and used strictly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions relating to proper dilution of the chemical, the effective temperature range and the necessary contact time.</p>	<p><b>What disinfection/sanitisation methods should you follow?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making up all sanitisers/disinfectants strictly in accordance with manufacturer instructions and on a daily basis/when needed</li> <li>• The use of hot tap water at 62.0°C to act as a disinfectant when in contact with surfaces, utensils or equipment</li> <li>• The use of dish washers operating to at least 80.0°C for at least 15 seconds</li> <li>• Only using cleaning implements that are identified to specific tasks so as to avoid cross-contamination</li> <li>• Only using cleaning implements which have themselves been kept clean/sanitised/ disinfected (as appropriate) before use</li> <li>• Ensuring that as a food handler you 'clean as you go' in order to keep bacterial levels down</li> <li>• Using single-use cleaning equipment such as disposable cloths</li> <li>• The washing of any re-useable cloths washed on a hot cycle, at 82.0°C or above, or boiled, and dried between tasks.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>CROSS CONTAMINATION VIA THE UNNECESSARY HANDLING OF FOOD</u></b></p> <p><i>E.Coli 0157</i> may be spread by unnecessarily handling of food.</p>	<p>By limiting hand contact with food the chances of infecting ready-to-eat food with <i>E.Coli 0157</i> is reduced.</p>	<p><b>What methods can you use to limit hand contact with ready-to-eat foods?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using tongs and other utensils to handle food</li> <li>• Wearing disposable gloves</li> <li>• Wearing clean clothing or disposable aprons</li> </ul>

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<p><b><u>CONTAMINATION VIA PARTICULAR PRODUCTS</u></b>  <i>E.Coli 0157</i> outbreaks have been associated with the consumption of sprouted seeds, such as alfalfa, bean sprouts and fenugreek.</p>	<p>Sprouted seeds of certain varieties have been found to contain <i>E.Coli 0157</i></p>	<p><b>What methods of control can you use?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heating food until steaming hot throughout</li> <li>• Equipment that has been used for the production and preparation of sprouting seeds which is cleaned thoroughly after use with hot soapy water</li> </ul>

### **What to do if things go wrong**

Always assume that any raw meat or unwashed vegetables are contaminated. If you think that any ready-to-eat food might have been contaminated due to not controlling the above-mentioned processes then you should immediately throw it away.

Follow all these instructions to prevent the spread of E.Coli in your home.

*Produced by Brentwood Borough Council, (01277 312504) based on the Food Standards Agency's Safer Food, Better Business (SFBB) format*