



Lenawee County  
**HEALTH**  
DEPARTMENT

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

## SHIGA-TOXIN PRODUCING E.COLI (STEC) FACT SHEET

### What is Shiga-toxin producing E.coli (STEC)?

E. coli are bacteria that normally live in intestines of humans and animals. There are many strains of E. coli bacteria. Most of them are harmless. However, some kinds of E. coli cause illness by making a toxin. STEC is a highly infectious form that produces a toxin called Shiga.

### What are the symptoms?

- Vomiting
- Watery or bloody diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Fever

**Symptoms can appear from 2 to 10 days after exposure, usually 3 to 4 days.**

### How can it be prevented?

- Wash hands thoroughly with warm, soapy water after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and/or before and during preparation of food
- Cook ground beef thoroughly; pink color should be gone
- **NEVER** put cooked hamburgers or meat on the plate they were on before cooking.
- Wash **ALL** fruit and vegetables well
- Refrigerate uneaten cooked foods immediately to prevent bacterial growth
- Drink only pasteurized milk, juice or cider.
- Avoid swallowing water from swimming pools, lakes, ponds or streams.

### How can it be spread?

- Eating raw or undercooked beef
- Contaminated water or food (lettuce, spinach, or unpasteurized milk)
- Can be spread to others via improper hand washing
- Infected person is contagious for a week; children up to 3 weeks

### How it is treated?

- Antibiotics normally are not required
- If you have diarrhea, drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration
- **Do not return to work until you are cleared by a health care provider**
- Hospitalization may be required on rare occasions