



## AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Tips and Resources on Foodborne Illness from the American College of Gastroenterology *European Outbreak of E. coli Points to Importance of Safe Food Handling***

**Bethesda, Maryland (June 3, 2011)** – For consumers in the United States concerned by the outbreak of *E. coli* in Europe, the American College of Gastroenterology offers background on foodborne illness, tips for food safety, and expert insight from its resources on digestive health on what to do in the case of foodborne illness.

#### **Foods most likely to carry foodborne illnesses**

Uncooked meat, raw eggs, and unpasteurized milk are the most likely foods to be contaminated. Foods such as ground beef, pooled raw eggs or unpasteurized milk, which are prepared by combining sources from many different animals, are especially problematic, as a whole batch can be contaminated by one infected animal. Vegetables that are eaten raw are also a problem, as they can be contaminated by washing with impure water or by fertilization with manure from infected animals. Raw shellfish are easily contaminated by sewage because these animals are filter feeders that feed by straining large quantities of seawater. Even properly prepared food can be cross-contaminated when juices from raw foods are dripped onto cooked food or when utensils or cutting boards used for raw food are also used for cooked food.

#### **Steps to prevent foodborne illnesses**

These simple recommendations can decrease the risk of developing a foodborne disease:

- Cook meat, poultry and eggs thoroughly
- Separate cooked and uncooked food. Avoid cross-contamination by not using platters or utensils contaminated by raw foods for cooked foods. Put cooked foods on clean platters, not the ones that held the raw meat.
- Chill leftovers promptly. Don't leave food out for more than 4 hours
- Clean produce. Wash hands before preparing food and immediately after handling raw foods.
- Report suspected food borne illness to the local health department.

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## **What to do if you develop a foodborne or waterborne illness**

Most persons with foodborne or waterborne illness recover spontaneously. Vomiting and diarrhea can lead to dehydration, so replacing lost fluids and chemicals in the blood are very important. When the diarrhea or vomiting is severe, it is best to use oral rehydration fluids (such as Pedialyte® or Oralyte®), as juices or even sport drinks (such as Gatorade®) do not have enough important minerals. Bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol®) may help slow down the symptoms. Diarrhea medication such as loperamide (Imodium®) can be used, but if you have a fever or blood in the stools, this medication can actually make things worse and should not be used. If you develop fever over 101.5, dizziness, dry mouth, bloody diarrhea, or if the diarrhea lasts for more than 3 days, you should see a doctor. Suspected food or waterborne illnesses should be reported to your local health department.

### **Useful Resources**

[American College of Gastroenterology](#)

[Centers for Disease Control & Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

[National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases \(NIAID\)](#)

U.S. Government Food Safety Information ([FoodSafety.gov](#))

### **About the American College of Gastroenterology**

Founded in 1932, the American College of Gastroenterology is an organization with an international membership of more than 12,000 individuals from 80 countries. The College is committed to serving the clinically oriented digestive disease specialist through its emphasis on scholarly practice, teaching and research. The mission of the College is to serve the evolving needs of physicians in the delivery of high quality, scientifically sound, humanistic, ethical, and cost-effective health care to gastroenterology patients. [www.acg.gi.org](http://www.acg.gi.org) Follow [ACG on Twitter](#).

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