

## PRESS RELEASE

### E coli – Update

The current data provided by the German health authorities suggests that incidences of this disease are now in decline, with the number of cases being reported sharply decreasing in the last few days.

There have been **NO** cases of either e-coli or Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS) in the BFG community during this entire period. There is always some background risk of gastro-intestinal illness of any kind and this can be best managed by good personal hygiene and food safety practices; some simple measures are detailed in the 'Prevention' section

### Background

E coli are common bacteria which live in the intestines of warm blooded animals and are naturally present in water and much of the environment . Some forms of E coli can live in the intestine of healthy people without causing any ill effects, however, some strains are known to cause illness. On average it takes 3-4 days after consumption of the bacteria for symptoms to develop, however, in some cases it can take up to 12 days. Symptoms range from mild to severe diarrhoea (50% of cases will have bloody diarrhoea); stomach cramps and or fever. Symptoms can last up to 2 weeks in cases without complications.

Most people rid themselves of the bacteria after about 1 week, though people may carry it for longer periods. In rare cases, however, individuals may have further complications (you may have seen the term Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS) in the press).

If you think you have any of the symptoms described you should contact your medical centre, by telephone in the first instance, for advice.

### Prevention

German health authorities advise that people need no longer avoid eating lettuce, tomatoes or cucumber, however, they should avoid eating bean sprouts, including those grown at home. This includes other forms of sprouting beans such as lentils, alfalfa seeds, fenugreek and adzuki beans.

The bacteria are killed at normal cooking temperatures so all meats should be thoroughly cooked, particularly hamburgers and any other dish containing or comprising minced meat which must be cooked to ensure that the centre of the product is "piping hot". Take care to keep raw and ready to eat food separate from each other and when you have been preparing raw meat or vegetables make sure that you clean the preparation surface carefully before using it for ready to eat items.

Hand washing is the best means of preventing the spread of the bacteria. Always wash your hands with soap and warm water after using the toilet and after handling raw meat or vegetables.

Disinfecting gels now commonly available are not an effective substitute for proper hand washing.

Whilst assessed as low risk, German Health Authorities in Hessen have found the bacteria in surface water. The sample was taken near a sewage treatment facility and this is thought to be the source. Accordingly caution should be exercised when swimming in rivers and individuals are advised to only swim in designated swimming areas.