

Enterotoxigenic *Escherichia coli*

ETEC

ETEC is a risk group 2 bacterium. It is considered a **reproductive pathogen** as an *E. coli* infection in the vagina or uterus might increase the risk of preterm delivery, low birth weight, preterm rupture of membranes, or stillbirth. *E. coli* infection may result in inflammation of the reproductive tract, blockages in the fallopian tubes, or endometriosis and may affect fertilization.

How can I be exposed to ETEC?

- Transmission typically occurs through the fecal-oral route.
- Laboratory workers may be exposed by ingestion of *E. coli*, parenteral inoculation, and mucous membrane or aerosol exposure.

How can I protect myself from exposure?

- Avoid direct skin contact by wearing protective clothing and gloves.
- Avoid mucous membrane exposure by using eye/face protection for procedures that may produce splashes.
- Avoid respiratory exposure by using a BSC or other primary containment device and wearing a respirator for procedures that may produce aerosols.
- The use of needles, syringes, and other sharp objects should be strictly limited, and additional precautions should be taken when working with animals.

What should I do if I think I've been exposed to ETEC?

Wash the affected area immediately for 15 minutes with soap and water and seek medical attention.

What symptoms should I look for after a potential exposure?

Abrupt onset of watery diarrhea is the most common symptom. Low-grade fever, nausea, and abdominal pain may also be present. Dehydration can cause more severe effects.

How long does it take for symptoms to develop?

Symptoms develop between 14 and 30 hours after exposure.

Is there a treatment or vaccine?

Treatment usually involves methods to counteract dehydration and reduce the duration of diarrhea. There are currently no approved vaccines to prevent infection.

Can I transmit it to other people?

Person-to-person transmission can occur but is uncommon because the infectious dose is high.

Can I transmit it to my pets?

While it is rare, it is possible for humans and animals to be infected with the same strains of ETEC.

Can it survive on surfaces?

Yes, ETEC can survive for 1.5 hours to 16 months on dry, inanimate surfaces.

See *Pathogen Safety Data Sheet* for More Information

