

E. Coli

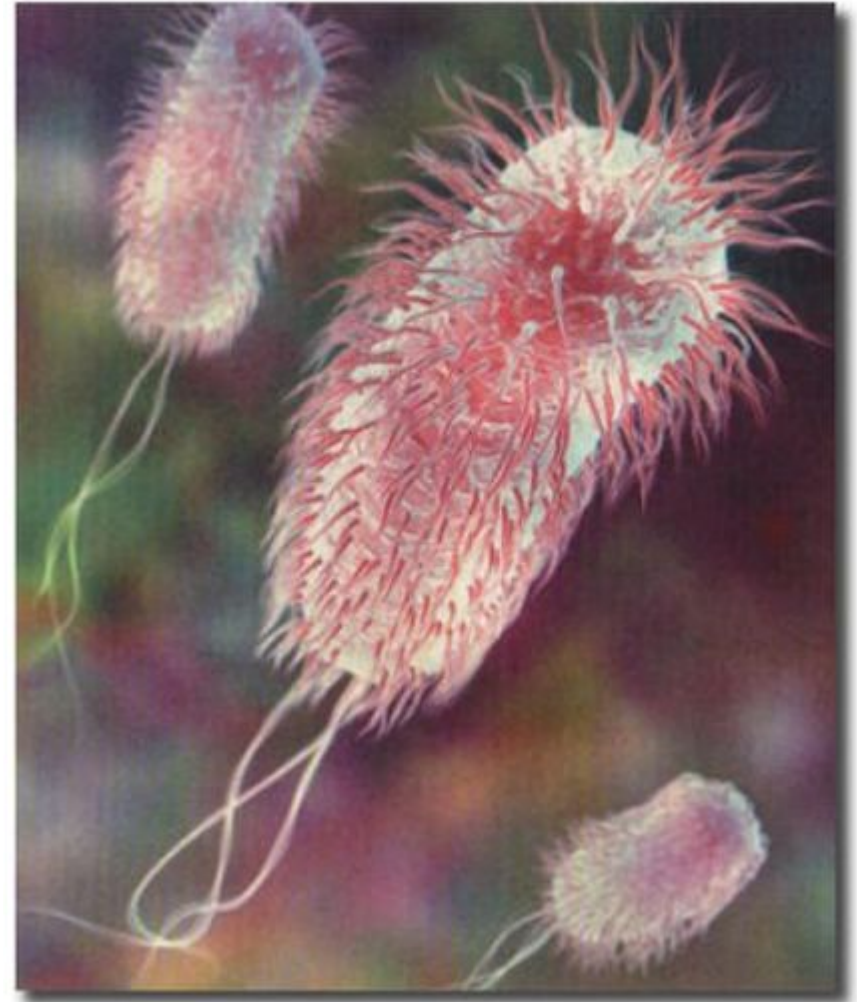
Loudoun County Health Department

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What is E. Coli?

Escherichia coli (*E. coli*) are bacteria found in the environment, foods, and intestines of people and animals.

Although most strains of *E. coli* are harmless to Humans, some strains can cause diarrhea, urinary tract infections, respiratory illness and pneumonia, and other illnesses.



E. coli in Surface Water

In humans and animals, E. coli is primarily found in the intestines.

When E. Coli is present in surface waters, it can be an indicator of possible fecal contamination.

While E. coli itself may be harmful to human health, other disease-causing organisms might also be present.



Health Risks of *E. coli* Contamination

Although usually harmless, *E. coli* can cause illnesses such as meningitis, septicemia, urinary tract, and intestinal infections.

The types of *E. coli* that can cause diarrhea can be transmitted through contaminated water or food, or through contact with animals or persons.

Contact your healthcare provider if you have diarrhea that lasts for more than 3 days, or it is accompanied by high fever, blood in the stool, or so much vomiting that you cannot keep liquids down and you pass very little urine.