



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Beef: Get the Red Out

Two Multistate Outbreaks of Shiga Toxin-Producing E. coli O157 Infections Linked to Ground Beef from a Nebraska Slaughter Establishment — United States, 2008

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Tossing some hamburgers on the grill can make for a relaxing evening, but failure to follow some simple precautions can have serious consequences. *Escherichia coli*, or *E. coli*, is a form of foodborne illness that can result from mishandling or undercooking beef products.

Dr. Melissa Viray is a medical epidemiologist with CDC's National Center for Zoonotic, Vector-Borne, and Enteric Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of thoroughly cooking meat to avoid foodborne illness. Welcome to the show, Melissa.

[Dr. Viray] Thanks for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Melissa, how common are *E. coli* outbreaks in the United States?

[Dr. Viray] Well, we at CDC investigate between 20 to 30 a year, but that is probably a pretty big underestimate since many foodborne illnesses don't get reported to their physicians.

[Dr. Gaynes] How does beef get infected with *E. coli*?

[Dr. Viray] *E. coli* is a bacteria that lives normally in the guts of animals like cattle, and once the beef is processed, that bacteria can contaminate the beef if proper procedures aren't taken, and the problem with ground beef is that that contamination, or that *E. coli*, can be spread throughout the beef during the grinding and mixing.

[Dr. Gaynes] Melissa, what are the symptoms of *E. coli* infection?

[Dr. Viray] Well, most develop some bloody diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal cramping, but children, in particular, can have severe complications that involve kidney damage and even death. So, as with any foodborne illness, people should drink lots of fluids and if they're worried or if their symptoms persist, they should call their healthcare provider, in particular, for children.

[Dr. Gaynes] What precautions should people take when cooking meat?

[Dr. Viray] People should always wash their hands, both before and after coming into contact with the meat. They should wash any surfaces that come into contact with raw meat, with hot soapy water, and for ground beef, in particular, they should be sure to cook the beef all the way through to an internal temperature of 160 degrees Fahrenheit. If a meat thermometer is not available, they should make sure the meat's not red or runny on the inside.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about *E. coli* and other types of food borne illness?

[Dr. Viray] More information can be found at www.cdc.gov/ecoli.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Melissa. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Melissa Viray about ways to avoid foodborne illness when handling raw meat.

Remember, thoroughly wash your hands and any surfaces that come in contact with raw meat. Ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit. A few simple precautions can help keep your grilled food safe for you and your family.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.