

**Rochdale Borough Council
Floor 3, Number One Riverside,
Smith Street,
Rochdale
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www.rochdale.gov.uk

To: All Schools and Early Years Settings including Family Hubs

___ November 2023

Dear colleague,

Re: Increase in Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) cases and incidents

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has advised of a recent increase in Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) cases and incidents in the Greater Manchester area, with some confirmed cases attending childcare settings during their infectious period.

What is STEC infection?

Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) is a highly infectious bacterial infection that can cause illness ranging from mild diarrhoea to life threatening conditions. For most cases, symptoms can last up to 2 weeks in cases without complications, but occasionally, and, in a small number of people, can cause a very serious illness called Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS).

The risk of HUS is highest in children aged under six years.

The infection can be easily passed to others and has been a cause of several outbreaks following incidents when people have eaten infected food, had contact with infected people or infected animals or their faeces.

How can you prevent further spread of infection?

Normal cooking temperatures kill STEC and it can be easily washed off hands. For *extra* reassurance, people can use antibacterial gels/wipes AFTER washing their hands with soap and water.

Key steps you can take include:

- Washing hands thoroughly with liquid soap and running water after using the toilet (or helping others including changing nappies), handling raw meat, before meals and after contact with animals. If they have false nails, paying particular attention to cleaning these thoroughly
- Young children should be supervised to thoroughly wash their hands after using the toilet.
- Ensure that supplies of liquid soap and paper hand towels are always available at all hand wash basins

- Cleaning hard surfaces including toilet bowls, flush handles, taps and hand basins regularly with hot soapy water followed by a disinfectant/sanitiser
- Avoid sharing of towels or face flannels with those infected
- Cleaning animal faeces from footwear/buggy wheels after visits to animal attractions and washing hands after doing so.
- Staying away from work/school/nursery until 48 hours after they have stopped vomiting or having diarrhoea and complying with any additional exclusions recommended by the Environmental Health and/or UK Health Security Agency Health Protection Team
- Check that all staff are aware of the process for cleaning up episodes of diarrhoea and/or vomiting (i.e. body fluid spillages); ensure PPE is available if required and an appropriate disinfectant product is available which meets EN14476 and EN1276. Spill kits may be in use in some settings and staff should be aware of their location and contents checked in case of expired stock or need for replenishment.

For queries or concerns, please contact our community infection prevention and control team on 01706 517198 or email at CommunityIPCPublicHealth@nca.nhs.uk

Further information relating to STEC can be found on the following websites:

- NHS Choices
<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Escherichia-Coli-O157/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
- UK Health Security Agency
[Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli: how to avoid and treat - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/shiga-toxin-producing-escherichia-coli-how-to-avoid-and-treat)
- The UK E. coli Support Group - Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome Help (HUSH)
<http://www.ecoli-uk.com/>
- Kidney Research, UK
[Haemolytic uraemic syndrome - Kidney Research UK](https://www.kidneyresearchuk.org/haemolytic-uraemic-syndrome)

Yours sincerely,



Kuiama Thompson
Director of Public Health