



MEDIA RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
140 Dameron Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37917-6413

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Knox County Health Department E. coli Update

Situational update:

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) continues to investigate a cluster of Escherichia coli (E. coli) 0157 cases in children likely associated with consumption of raw milk and contact with farm animals. To date, more than 10 cases of E. coli 0157 have been reported to KCHD, all are among children.

Regarding the timeline, last week KCHD received a report from a child care facility, A Kids Place, Inc. in Mascot, Tenn., of a child who may have E. coli. Following our standard protocols, KCHD reviewed the case's lab report and contacted the case to identify potential exposures. Over the next several days, KCHD received reports from laboratories, physician's offices and East Tennessee Children's Hospital of children with E. coli infection. All cases were interviewed, and standard epidemiological protocols were followed.

Investigation status:

The majority of those who are ill reported consuming raw milk from a local cow-share dairy, French Broad Farm in Knox County, Tenn. Due to possible contamination with E. coli 0157 and out of an abundance of caution, KCHD continues to advise the public not to consume raw milk or any other unpasteurized products they may have from the farm; this includes disposing of all raw milk and unpasteurized products they may have from this farm. Environmental samples, milk and manure, have been collected for testing. The timeline for results is unknown. The farm is not currently distributing milk.

Several other cases reported attending A Kids Place, Inc. During the investigation, exposure to ruminant farm animals was identified as a potential source of infection. All cases were among an age group that was housed in one portion of the facility. That portion is not operating. And, by taking infection control steps, the imminent health threat has been mitigated. Environmental samples from the facility and animals have been collected for testing. The timeline for results is unknown. Any further action regarding the operation of the facility will be determined by the Tennessee Department of Human Services, as the facility's regulatory authority.

Background:

Raw milk and other unpasteurized products can contain harmful bacteria, including E. coli 0157. While it is possible to get sick from many other foods, raw milk is one of the riskiest. E. coli can also be found in the feces of cattle, goats, sheep and other ruminant animals. Historically, the major source for human illness is cattle, which can carry E. coli 0157 and show no signs of illness. These bacteria, however, can cause severe diarrhea and even life-threatening complications for humans, especially children, older adults, pregnant women and those with compromised immune systems. E. coli can be spread person-to-person through the fecal-oral route, which is why adequate handwashing is crucial in preventing the bacteria from spreading to others. More information on preventing E. coli can be found on the [CDC's website](#).





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Symptoms of E. coli infection vary for each person, but often include severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), and vomiting. Some may have a low fever (less than 101°F). Some infections are mild, but others can be severe.

Seek medical attention immediately if you or your child has diarrhea lasting more than two days or contains blood. Tell your provider if you or your child have consumed raw milk or had contact with farm animals.

About Knox County Health Department

As the first health department in Tennessee to achieve national voluntary accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is dedicated to ensuring the conditions in which every resident can be healthy. KCHD investigates disease outbreaks, identifies community health threats, conducts extensive outreach and education, prepares for public health emergencies, provides and connects the public with medical care, enforces food safety and air quality laws, and more. For more information, visit www.knoxcounty.org/health.

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