

If you have any questions you want to ask, you can use the space below to remind you:

Infection prevention and control

Information for patients about E. coli

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.

Contact The Christie Hotline for urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week



What is E. coli?

E. coli is a common bacteria that lives in the gut of animals and humans.

E. coli can be found in faeces and can survive in open environments.

E.coli does not usually cause any problems whilst it is living in the gut, but if the bacteria contaminates areas of vulnerability (wounds or catheter site for example), infection can occur. E. coli have the ability to cause a variety of infections. These include:

- Gastrointestinal disease
- Urinary tract infection (UTI)
- Bacteraemia (blood stream infections).

UTIs are the most common route of acquiring an E. coli infection, therefore, hand hygiene, good hydration, catheter management (for those with urinary catheters or lines), and appropriate antibiotic therapy is paramount.

What are the signs and symptoms of E. coli?

- Generally feeling unwell
- Fever / rigors
- Altered mental state
- Reduced mobility
- Headache
- Pelvic pain
- Loin pain
- Frequency in passing urine
- Burning sensation when passing urine
- Your urine has an offensive smell or is an unusual colour
- Haematuria (blood in the urine).

How did I get E. coli?

Because E. coli colonises the gut as part of the natural bacteria, it is easy for you to infect yourself with E. coli, especially if you have open channels such as catheters, lines or wounds; or you are immunosuppressed.

E. coli can also be transmitted via the hands of healthcare workers, other patients, contaminated equipment and environmental contamination.

How is urinary tract E. coli diagnosed and treated?

A urine sample is obtained and sent to the microbiology laboratory for testing. Patients who are colonised with E. coli do not generally require any treatment. Only patients who show signs and symptoms of an infection will be prescribed antibiotic treatment by a healthcare professional.

How can recurring infections be prevented?

Recurring infections can be prevented by:

- Drinking plenty of fluids (especially clean, fresh water).
- Wiping yourself from front to back when cleaning/washing.
- Washing your hands after using the toilet, before handling invasive devices such as lines or catheters, before preparing and eating food.
- Eating a well-balanced diet to prevent constipation.