



MEDIA RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Knox County Health Department Issues E. coli Alert

Knoxville, Tenn. — The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is investigating a cluster of Escherichia coli (E. coli) 0157 cases in children likely associated with consumption of raw milk and contact with farm animals.

Most of the children are known to have consumed raw milk from a local cow-share dairy. Due to possible contamination with E. coli 0157 and out of an abundance of caution, KCHD advises the public not to consume raw milk or any other unpasteurized products from French Broad Farm in Knoxville, Tenn. at this time. Officials also recommend consumers dispose of all raw milk and unpasteurized products they may have from this farm.

Any further exposure to the farm animals in question has been mitigated as the facility is not currently operating. Therefore, no further directive on that potential source is necessary.

“Bacteria, like E. coli, cannot be seen with the naked eye,” said KCHD Director Dr. Martha Buchanan. “For some perspective, roughly 1,800 can fit on the head of a pin, and it only takes about 10 to make you sick.”

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. Information on preventing E. coli can be found on the [CDC's website](#).

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 watery, bloody diarrhea that does not resolve quickly. Tell your provider if you or your child have consumed raw milk or had contact with farm animals. For general questions about E. coli, you may call 865-215-5555 between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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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