



Germany Crisis Daily Update

Letter No. (3)

2.6.2011

Life Threatening Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS)

E. coli is a bacterium that is commonly found in the gut of humans and warm-blooded animals. Most strains of E. coli are harmless. Some strains however, such as enterohaemorrhagic E. coli (EHEC), can cause severe food borne disease. It is transmitted to humans primarily through consumption of contaminated foods, such as raw or undercooked ground meat products and raw milk. It is destroyed by cooking of foods until all parts reach a temperature of 70°C or higher.

Symptoms include abdominal cramps and diarrhoea that may in some cases progress to bloody diarrhoea. Fever and vomiting may also occur. The incubation period can range from three to eight days. Most patients recover within 10 days, but in a small proportion of patients, particularly young children and the elderly, the infection may lead to a life-threatening disease, such as haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS).

Haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS) is a life-threatening disease characterized by acute renal failure (uraemia), haemolytic anaemia, and a low platelet count (thrombocytopenia). It predominantly, but not exclusively affects children. It results from EHEC infection, and it is estimated that up to 10% of EHEC-affected patients may develop HUS, with a mortality rate ranging up to 5%. Overall, HUS is the most common cause of acute renal failure in young children. It can cause neurological complications (such as seizure, stroke and coma) in 25% of HUS patients and chronic renal sequelae, usually mild, in around 50% of survivors.

The incidence highest in children aged less than 15 years. There is generally a background of sporadic cases, with occasional outbreaks. In the current outbreak in Germany, the disease attacks unusually mainly young adults and mostly females.

It is transmitted to humans through consumption of contaminated foods, such as raw or undercooked ground meat products and raw milk. Fecal contamination of water and other foods, as well as cross-contamination during food preparation will also lead to infection.



Person-to-person contact is an important mode of transmission through the oral-fecal route.

The reported data as of 31.5.2011

1. No. of cases:  Increasing  
 Decreasing  
 No. change  
 No information available

Total No.: 470

2. No. of deaths:  Increasing  
 Decreasing  
 No. change  
 No information available

Total No.: 9

3. Follow 5 Food safety keys:
- Keep clean.
  - Separate raw and cooked.
  - Cook thoroughly.
  - Keep food at safe temperatures.
  - Use safe water and raw materials

4. Banning on travel:  Yes  
 No

5. Banning on trade:  Yes  
 No

Belgium and Russia banned some vegetables from Germany and Spain.

***Dr. Muna Al Mousawi***  
*Consultant Family Physician*  
*Public Health Consultant for IHR*  
*National IHR Focal Officer*