



Since July 2014, there have been several cases of a rare strain of E coli infection across Dorset.

The strain, known as E coli VTEC 055, hasn't been seen in this country before. It has made several children and adults ill as was shown in the recent [BBC Inside Out programme](#).

E coli is a bacterial infection which lives mainly in the gut or faeces of many animals. It can be passed on to humans through eating contaminated food (such as raw, unwashed vegetables or undercooked meat), touching infected animals or accidentally coming into contact with their faeces, close contact with people who are infected, drinking water that hasn't been adequately treated, swimming or playing in contaminated water.

It should be noted that there are currently no known cases of E coli 055 in Dorset.

[Public Health England](#), the national body with responsibility for managing local disease outbreaks, has been working to find the source of the infection. This has involved international experts working with local partners, including environmental health teams from local councils, to investigate any common link between the cases and analyse samples taken from the environment.

Public Health Dorset, which is a partnership of Bournemouth Borough Council, Borough of Poole, and Dorset County Council, has been supporting local agencies with this work.

So far these ongoing extensive investigations haven't found a source.

Ways to protect yourself from E coli infection

There are simple and effective ways that you can protect yourself and your family from E coli infection.

You can do this by:

- washing hands thoroughly after using the toilet, before and after handling food, and after handling animals
- removing any loose soil before storing vegetables and salads
- washing all vegetables and fruits that will be eaten raw
- storing and preparing raw meat and unwashed vegetables away from ready-to-eat foods
- not preparing raw vegetables with utensils that have also been used for raw meat
- cooking all minced meat products, such as burgers and meat balls, thoroughly



People who have been ill should not prepare food for others for at least 48 hours after they have recovered.

If you are concerned about E coli, contact Public Health England on 0345 055 2022.