

# FACT SHEET    Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome

(HUS)

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## **What is Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS)?**

HUS is an illness in which the red blood cells are destroyed and the kidneys fail. HUS is a condition that can follow diarrhea caused by certain kinds of bacteria, including *E. coli* O157:H7 (and other *E. coli* strains) or *Shigella dysenteriae*. It can be serious, however, only a small percent of people with *E. coli* or *Shigella dysenteriae* develop HUS. Not all cases of HUS are caused by infection with these bacteria.

## **How is HUS spread?**

HUS cannot be spread between people. However, the bacteria *E. coli* (O157:H7 and others) and *Shigella dysenteriae*, that can cause HUS, can be spread to others if personnel hygiene is not good. Handwashing and correct food handling are always important.

## **Who gets HUS?**

Anyone can get HUS but children under five and the elderly are at higher risk.

## **What are the symptoms of HUS?**

People with HUS may have less urine output, tiredness, or sometimes, blood in the urine.

## **How soon do symptoms appear?**

HUS caused by *E. coli* (O157:H7 and others) or *Shigella dysenteriae* infection usually occurs within three weeks after onset of diarrhea.

## **What should you do if you think you may have HUS?**

Contact your doctor right away.

## **Can HUS occur more than once?**

HUS can occur following any infection with *E. coli* (O157:H7 and others) or *Shigella dysenteriae*, or sometimes after other less common bacterial infections.

## **How is HUS prevented?**

Handwashing and safe food handling greatly reduce the risk of HUS by reducing the chances of becoming infected with *E. coli* (O157:H7 and others) or *Shigella dysenteriae*.