



Protecting and improving the nation's health

27<sup>th</sup> September 2021

**To the parents/carers of children in reception and nursery class at St Hugh of Lincoln RC Primary, Glastonbury Road, Stretford, Manchester, M32 9PD**

I am writing regarding a child that attends the reception class at St Hugh of Lincoln RC Primary who recently had gastroenteritis caused by *Shiga toxin producing Escherichia coli* (STEC) infection. There is no indication that the school is the source of the infection. Please see the attached leaflet for further information on the infection.

**Testing for infection**

There is a small risk that other children in both reception and nursery classes could be affected, even if they have no symptoms at present, as both classes share the toileting facilities. As a precaution Public Health England and Trafford Council are advising that the children in the reception class and nursery class should be tested for the infection. This involves **submitting one faeces (poo) sample for screening.**

**Sample pots have been delivered to the school. Please pick up a sample pot from the school on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> September when you pick up your child and return the pot to the school by 9am on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> September. Please follow the instructions included with the sample pots. It is important that you make sure that your child's name (first and surname) and date of birth are written on both the request form and the sample pot. Please put the samples in the pre-paid envelope as per instructions and then return the envelopes to the school.**

We have arranged for a courier to pick the pots up on Wednesday. This will ensure that the samples get delivered and tested as quickly as possible. A second collection will be available on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> should you be unable to provide a sample by Wednesday morning.

As this is only a highly precautionary measure at this stage, the school will remain open and your child can attend while awaiting the result of the samples. It may take up to a week for the results to come back.

**What to do if symptoms develop**

It is very important any child/staff who develops diarrhoea and/or vomiting should remain off school until they are 48hours clear of symptoms and have submitted their faecal sample to show there is no infection present. Please let the school know if your child has these symptoms.

If the diarrhoea persists for more than 24 hours or blood is in the stool, contact your GP immediately so they can assess you (staff)/your child and arrange for a sample to be tested. Please take this letter with you.

**Hygiene advice**

As an additional precaution we are asking parents and school staff to maintain a high level of vigilance and enhanced hygiene, particularly supervised hand washing.

We very much appreciate your support in supporting the precautionary measures to stop transmission of the infection.

Yours faithfully



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Eleanor Roaf

Director of Public Health  
Trafford MBC



## **General information on STEC**

### ***What is STEC?***

STEC (Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli*) can cause illness ranging from mild diarrhoea to life threatening conditions. STEC O157 is the most common type in the UK and in a small number of people can cause very serious illness called Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS). The risk of HUS is highest in children aged under 6 years.

We know that STEC is very infectious and can be easily passed to others. It has also been the cause of several outbreaks following eating infected food, contact with infected people and touching infected animals or their poo.

In some European countries, other types of STEC are the cause of serious illness and outbreaks.

### ***How do people become infected?***

People may become infected with STEC in a variety of ways:

- **Eating infected/contaminated food** that has not been cooked all the way through, particularly minced meat products such as burgers and sausages, or salad items that have not been washed properly
- **Handling/preparation of food contaminated with soil** for example, potatoes and leeks where the soil has not been washed away
- **Drinking infected/contaminated water** such as from streams, rivers and lakes etc. which may contain animal poo
- **Close contact with animals**, particularly cattle, sheep and goats. Animal saliva may be infected because of the way animals clean themselves
- **Direct contact with animal poo** on the animal itself, in their pen or on the floor
- **Contact with an infected person**, particularly if people don't wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet or before handling food



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### ***What are the symptoms?***

It usually takes between 2 and 4 days from being infected with STEC to develop symptoms which may be:

- No symptoms
- Very mild diarrhea
- Stomach pain
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Severe diarrhoea with blood
- Passing less urine than normal
- Haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS)

### ***How can infected people prevent others from becoming ill?***

Normal cooking temperatures kill STEC and it can be easily washed off hands. For extra reassurance, people can use antibacterial gels/wipes AFTER washing your hands with soap and water.

Key steps people can take include:

- **Washing hands thoroughly** with liquid soap and running water after using the toilet (or helping others including changing nappies), handling raw meat, before meals and after contact with animals. If they have false nails, paying particular attention to cleaning these thoroughly
- **Cleaning hard surfaces** including toilet bowls, flush handles, taps and hand basins regularly with hot soapy water followed by a disinfectant/sanitiser
- **Washing dirty clothes, bedding and towels** on the hottest wash cycle possible and not sharing towels or face flannels with someone who is infected
- **Cleaning animal faeces from footwear/buggy wheels** after visits to animal attractions and washing hands after doing so
- **Staying away from work/school/nursery** until 48 hours after they have stopped vomiting or having diarrhoea and **complying with any additional exclusions** recommended by the Environmental Health and/or Public Health England Health Protection Team



Public Health  
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***Where can I get further information about STEC?***

Further information relating to STEC can be found on the following websites:

- NHS Choices  
<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Escherichia-Coli-O157/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
- Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vero-cytotoxin-producing-escherichia-coli-vtec-guidance-data-and-analysis>
- The UK E.coli Support Group called H.U.S.H (Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome Help)  
<http://www.ecoli-uk.com/>