



# VTEC (or STEC) on the farm



## What is VTEC?



VTEC, sometimes called STEC, is a type of E.coli bacteria that can make you very sick.



VTEC/STEC can be found in the gut of animals and is easily passed onto humans.



Young children and people over 65 years of age are most at risk of getting very sick from VTEC/STEC



Ireland has one of the highest number of VTEC/STEC cases in Europe.

## Symptoms of VTEC/STEC infection can include:



Vomiting



Temperature



Cramps



Diarrhoea



Bloody diarrhoea



Not everyone gets symptoms, but they can still pass VTEC/STEC on to others

## What is HUS?



HUS (Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome) happens when VTEC/STEC toxins attack your red blood cells. It can cause your kidneys to stop working properly.



1 person in every 10 people who gets VTEC/STEC will develop HUS. Young children and elderly people are most at risk.



Approximately 1 child in every 20 children with HUS develops complications such as damage to kidneys and other organs. HUS can even be fatal.



30 - 40 people will get HUS each year in Ireland.

## Signs of HUS can include:



Irritability



Limpness  
Weakness



Passing small amount  
of pee or none at all



Sometimes bruising, little  
red spots, or yellowish skin



Tiredness



Paleness



Decreased  
consciousness



Seizures - this is rare

## The impact of VTEC/STEC on your family:



It can cause people to be very sick for up to 10 days. In Ireland 4 out of every 10 people with VTEC/STEC need to be admitted to hospital. HUS can lead to months of hospitalisation with serious illness.



Your child must be excluded from crèche or childcare until VTEC/STEC clears from their system.



Family members working in health care, child care, or the food industry must stay home from work until stool (poo) samples come back clear.

## You can catch VTEC/STEC from:



Direct contact with animal dung.



Clothing, boots and equipment used on the farm.



Water from undertreated and inadequately maintained wells.



Using undertreated water to wash fruit or salad vegetables.



Eating undercooked meat, especially minced beef.



Feeding, handling or petting animals or being in their surroundings.



From another person with VTEC/STEC.



Drinking undertreated water or brushing your teeth with it.



Swimming in contaminated water.



Drinking or eating unpasteurised dairy products.

## How to protect your family and others:



Get medical advice from your nearest Emergency Department if you think you or your child has HUS. **Phone 999 or 112** in an emergency.



Stay at home if you, or any person in your family, has diarrhoea. Get medical advice from your GP. They may arrange for a test on a sample from your stool (poo).



Make sure everyone washes their hands after contact with animals, being on the farm, using the toilet, before and after nappy changing, before preparing food and before eating.



Leave boots and overalls outside the home, if possible, and always out of reach of young children.



Keep floors clean. Young children will pick bits from the floor to eat or suck their hands and fingers after touching the floor - allowing germs to enter their bodies.



Keep yards clean and clean jeeps and cars regularly, especially if you bring children in them.



Try to leave cuddly toys, blankies and soothers (dummies) in the house so that they are not dropped.



Make sure that private wells are properly protected, maintained and treated. Read our *Could your well make you unwell?* leaflet for more information.



Wash all fruit and vegetables properly (with clean water) before eating - it may be necessary to peel them.



Cook meat and poultry properly.



If eating or drinking dairy products, make sure they are pasteurised.



Be careful when choosing a swimming spot - use [recognised bathing areas](#) only and follow any warnings displayed.



Supervise children at all times when they are on the farm, around animals or near water.

Visit our [webpage](http://www.hse.ie/publichealth) for more information—[www.hse.ie/publichealth](http://www.hse.ie/publichealth)