

FACT SHEET Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome

(HUS)

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*.