E. Coli

What is E. Coli?

E. coli is a subgroup of the fecal coliform group. Most E. coli bacteria are harmless and exist in the intestines of people and warm-blooded animals. However, some strains can cause illness. The presence of E. coli in a drinking water sample usually indicates recent fecal contamination.

Does E. Coli have any additional names?

Escherichia coli

What are the known health effects?

Although most strains of E. Coli are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals, certain strains produce a powerful toxin and can cause severe illness. Infection often causes severe bloody diarrhea and abdominal cramps; sometimes the infection causes non-bloody diarrhea. Frequently, no fever is present. It should be noted that these symptoms are common to a variety of diseases and may be caused by sources other than contaminated drinking water.

How does exposure occur?

E. coli is most commonly found on a small number of cattle farms where the bacteria can live in the intestines of healthy cattle. Millions of germs can be released in a bowel movement from an infected human or animal. E. coli O157:H7 may be found in water sources, such as private wells, that have been contaminated with feces from infected humans or animals. Waste can enter the water through different ways, including sewage overflows, sewage systems that are not working properly, polluted storm water runoff, and agricultural runoff.

Is this contaminant regulated?

Yes, there is no allowable amount of E. Coli in drinking water. MLTMUA has not detected E. Coli in our water system.

How can I reduce exposure?

E. Coli in drinking water can be removed by boiling water prior to use.

Additional information regarding E. Coli, including the information referenced, can be found at:
https://www.doh.wa.gov/portals/1/documents/pubs/331-181.pdf
https://www.freedrinkingwater.com/water-contamination/ecoli-bacteria-removal-water.htm