



# Guidelines

## For Returning to School and Work Following an E. Coli (STEC) Outbreak at Mánagarður Preschool

- When children can return to school and adults can return to work



Directorate of Health  
Chief Epidemiologist for Iceland

These guidelines aim to prevent further outbreaks of STEC infection in the community.

### 1. Children who have not been diagnosed with STEC

- Children who have not been tested for STEC **BUT** have had diarrhea or loose stools after October 17th **OR** have diarrhea (or get diarrhea in the next 2 weeks) should **not attend** kindergarten **AND** should submit a stool sample for PCR testing<sup>a)</sup>. If the sample is positive (signs of infection are found), refer to section 2 below.
- Completely asymptomatic<sup>b)</sup> children who have not been diagnosed with STEC **can attend** the preschool. Handwashing and general hygiene must be strictly observed, especially around meals, toilet visits, and diaper changes.

### 2. Children and adults who have been diagnosed with STEC

Those who have been diagnosed with STEC should **not** go to school or work until the following conditions are met:

- Diarrhea and other signs of the infection have ceased, and stools are normal (formed stools) for at least 2 consecutive days.
- After 2 days without symptoms, **a stool sample must be submitted** for a PCR test. Two days after that **a second sample** should be submitted.
- Both samples undergo PCR analysis (takes one day) and a positive sample is then cultured (takes 3 days).
- Both samples need to indicate that the individual is not infectious.
- If a test is positive (including culture) the individual should stay at home and submit new samples in 2 weeks. If those samples are negative, it is safe to return to school or work.
- Research shows that positive tests from most individuals become negative in 3-4 weeks from the event. Few tests remain positive longer than that.

3. Adult **employees of the preschool** and **adult household members of the children**, who became ill or were diagnosed with STEC, and who work in food handling or the health service in patient care should **submit 2 stool samples** for PCR testing and receive negative results before returning to work.
  4. **Other household members of the children** (children and adults) do **not** need to submit a stool sample, but they should be symptom-free from gastroenteritis for at least 2 days before returning to school or work.
- a) **Faecal samples:** See [Instructions on how to take a stool sample](#)
- b) **Asymptomatic:** No diarrhea, no looser stools than usual, and no increase in stool frequency.

### Summary of test results

- Positive PCR and positive culture = Live bacteria, there is a risk of infection.
- Positive PCR and negative culture = Dead (inactive) bacteria, low risk of infection.
- Negative PCR = Negative sample = Bacteria not found, low risk of infection.

### The Chief Epidemiologist

#### Sources:

1. [Guidance Shiga toxin-producing \*Escherichia coli\*: public health management](#) UK Health Security Agency
2. [E. coli enteritis \(including EHEC infection and HUS\) – handbook for healthcare professionals](#) Norwegian Institute of Public Health

#### Selected references:

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2. Desai M and others. 'Factors associated with prolonged *Escherichia coli* O157 infection in a school outbreak.' *Public Health* 2013: volume 127, issue 6, pages 582 to 585
3. Launder N and others. 'Disease severity of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* O157 and factors influencing the development of typical hemolytic uraemic syndrome: a retrospective cohort study, 2009 to 2012.' *BMJ Open* 2016. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2015009933
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7. Snedeker KG, S.D., Locking ME, Prescott RJ. 'Primary and secondary cases in *Escherichia coli* O157 outbreaks: a statistical analysis.' *BMC Infectious Diseases* 2009: 9
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