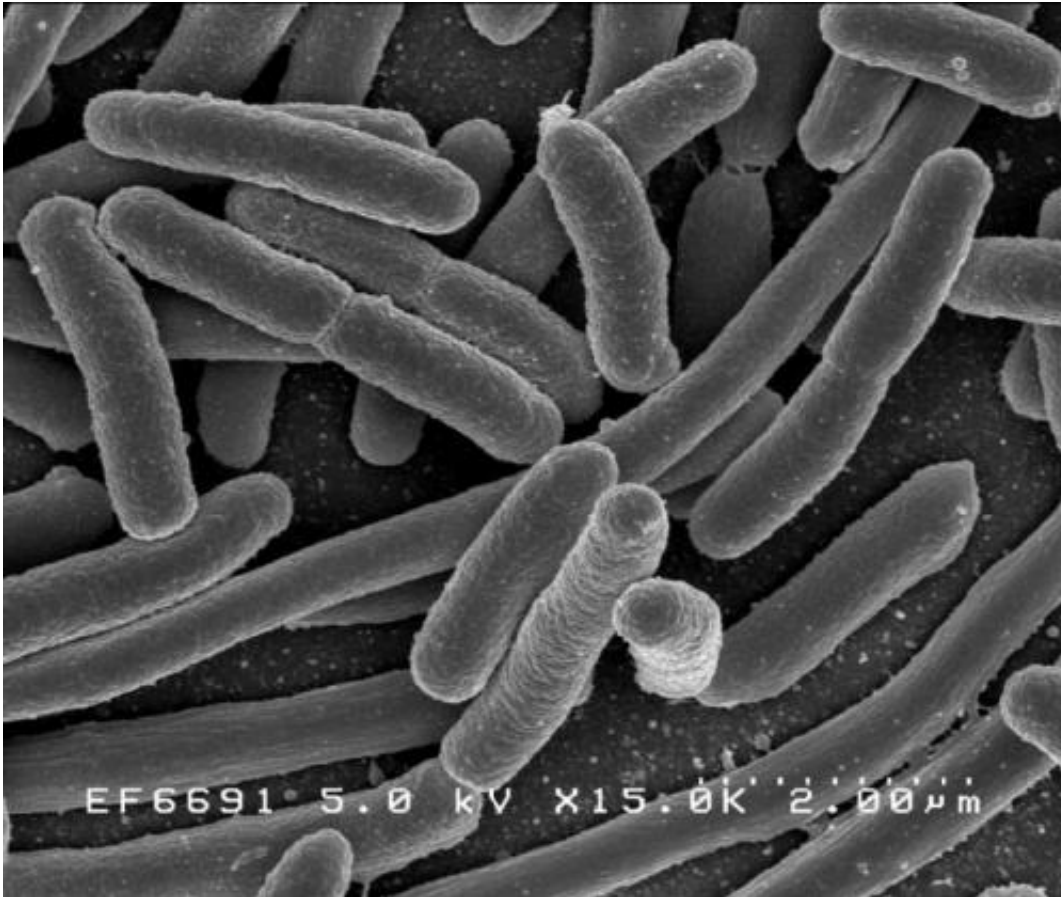


# Avoid E. coli with proper burger cooking

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Escherichia coli. Credit: Rocky Mountain Laboratories, NIAID, NIH

The return of the summer cookout brings with it the risk for sickness from a bacteria that can end up spoiling more than one meal. Cook hamburgers incorrectly, and you could end up with a case of E. coli.

"E. coli stands for Escherichia coli, which is a type of bacteria," says Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse, a Mayo Clinic infectious diseases specialist. "Most commonly, we hear about it in raw or undercooked hamburger meat."

Dr. Rajapakse says E. coli bacteria can create some stomach-turning symptoms, such as abdominal pain and nausea. But it can get worse.

"There's a specific type of E. coli.," says Dr. Rajapakse. "It's called O157:H7, which can cause bloody diarrhea and has been associated with a condition that can cause kidney damage, especially in young children."

The elderly are also at higher risk for problems with E. coli, as are [pregnant women](#), people with underlying digestive problems and those with weakened immune systems. "If somebody were to be exposed to E. coli in something they ate or drank, they may have symptom onset within a couple of days to a few weeks after infection or exposure," explains Dr. Rajapakse.

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