



Escherichia coli (E. COLI)

Statement:

The American Peanut Council has adopted the U.S. Food & drug Administration's voluntary code of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs), which includes recommended operating procedures specifically for peanut processors. The recommended procedures include regular sampling, testing and verification that microbiological contamination is not present in peanut manufacturing plants. In addition, according to the GMPs, commercial peanut processing must include a step to eliminate microbiological contamination, such as disease-causing *E.coli*; this is referred to as a "kill step." The roasting process satisfies this requirement. Good Manufacturing Practices also recommend thorough sanitizing of hands, work surfaces, and utensils, which further reduces the potential for contamination.

There are no known cases of U.S. peanut products being contaminated with any pathogenic, or disease-causing, *E.coli* in the United States.

Fact Sheet:

Escherichia coli (E. coli) is a diverse group of bacteria. Most *E.coli* bacteria are harmless. Generic *E.coli* is a normal inhabitant of the intestines of all animals, including humans. It serves a useful function in the body by suppressing the growth of harmful bacterial species and by synthesizing appreciable amounts of vitamins. However, disease-causing *E.coli* can cause human illness and is therefore a threat to public health

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. food & Drug Administration have banned the following *E. coli* bacteria because of their potential to cause foodborne illness: *E. coli* O26, O45, O103, O111, O121, O145 and O157:H7. *E. coli* O157:H7, which has been banned since 1994, is thought to be the most aggressive of these disease-causing bacteria. While the other six are associated with diarrhea, *E. coli* O157:H7 can cause severe damage to the lining of the intestine, and can lead to kidney failure and even death, particularly in the very young, old or immunocompromised.

Though most *E.coli*-related illnesses have been associated with eating undercooked, contaminated ground beef, people have also become ill from consuming non-ground contaminated beef and contaminated produce, and by drinking unpasteurized milk and apple juice.

According to health authorities, consumers can reduce the risk of pathogenic *E. coli* infections by thoroughly cooking ground beef, avoiding unpasteurized milk and juices, and by washing hands carefully before preparing or eating food. Fruits and vegetables should be washed well before eating them. The risk of cross contamination in food preparation areas can be reduced by thoroughly washing hands, counters, cutting boards, and utensils after they contact with raw meat.



Because *E. coli* O157:H7 lives in the intestines of healthy cattle, preventive measures on cattle farms, during meat processing, and during the growth, harvesting and processing of fresh produce are being used to reduce the risk of contamination in these products.

Approved 12/11/14. For further information, please contact the American Peanut Council office in Alexandria, Va. at: Tel: 703-838-9500; email: info@peanutsusa.com.