

FACT SHEET

Enterotoxigenic Escherichia coli (ETEC)

Common clinical features

Diarrhoea which may be mild to severe, typically profuse and watery without blood or mucus. Abdominal pains, vomiting and low grade fever may be present. Usually the symptoms last for less than 5 days.

Incubation period

12 – 72 hours.

Where is it found?

The gastrointestinal tract of humans, no known animal reservoir.

How is it acquired by affected individuals?

From ingestion of contaminated food and, less often, contaminated water. Direct person to person spread (faecal oral) is unlikely unless hygiene is very poor. ETEC is the major cause of travellers diarrhoea particularly among travellers to developing countries. ETEC is also the major cause of severe diarrhoea and dehydration in young children in developing countries.

How does the laboratory confirm the diagnosis?

There is no test in routine use in clinical diagnostic laboratories. In the **iid2** study a research molecular test is being used to identify ETEC at the reference laboratory and the result will be available within seven days.

How is it treated?

Rehydration and symptomatic treatment of diarrhoea. Antibiotic treatment is only recommended for severe and continuing diarrhoea. Advice on antibiotic treatment should be sought from your local microbiology laboratory.