

Epsom's child-play hobbled by e-coli

4 August 2023



The popular adventure park off Horton Lane in Epsom known as **Hobbledown** has temporarily closed. This follows reports by the UK Health and Security Agency that three children who had visited the park had developed symptoms consistent with STEC (Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli)

Most E. coli strains do not cause disease, naturally living in the gut, but virulent strains can cause gastroenteritis, urinary tract infections, neonatal meningitis and other conditions.

Nick De Candole, the owner, published a statement on the business's website as follows:

"We have been informed by health authorities of a very small number of cases of an E. coli infection in individuals who recently visited the Park. After learning of this we immediately and voluntarily closed the Park as a precaution.

We are in close contact with Epsom & Ewell District Council Environmental Health team and also the UK Health Security Agency and co-operating fully with both on their respective investigations.

I have written to everyone who visited between 11 and 27 July to inform them of the situation and included with this a letter from the UKHSA with further information and guidance.

We are offering those who have booked to visit while we're closed options to reschedule or a full refund, plus 50% off next visit.

I can assure everyone that the wellbeing of visitors to Hobbledown is our absolute priority and we do everything in our power to keep guests safe. We look forward to welcoming everyone back soon."

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council advises "The symptoms of STEC , which include diarrhoea and stomach cramps, usually resolve themselves over a few days, but can occasionally lead to more serious outcomes. If you or someone in your family are showing symptoms of STEC, including bloody diarrhoea, and have visited the farm since 12 July, please contact NHS 111."

Personal injury adviser Claire Glasgow of law firm Field Fisher explains why E.coli must be taken seriously. "Several children involved in past claims for damages for negligent exposure to the E.Coli O157 bacteria subsequently developed HUS (haemolytic uraemic syndrome). HUS can lead to very serious complications including high blood pressure, heart failure, kidney failure, diabetes, seizures, neurological damages, coma, and, in severe cases, brain damage.

"An additional concern for the families involved is the uncertainty of the impact of the infection on their children as they grow up. At the very least, they face regular and ongoing hospital tests and live under the stress of potential long-term health problems."