

A RAW DEAL

A little sample of raw cookie or cake dough can often be tempting. However, not waiting until the oven has done its job can be dangerous.



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Cookies fresh from the oven warm the hearts of young and old alike, especially when it's cold outside. Some succumb to temptation before the treats even land on the plate. However, eating raw dough can lead to food infections.

The culprits are the bacteria known as *Escherichia (E.) coli*. They occur naturally in the intestines of humans and animals. Certain *E. coli* form toxins. *E. coli* that form Shiga toxins – known as STEC – are particularly relevant for humans. STEC that trigger severe illness in humans are termed enterohaemorrhagic *E. coli* (EHEC). STEC/EHEC bacteria can infect plant-based foodstuffs such as grain via contaminated water, natural fertiliser, or the excrement of wildlife. During the further processing of corn into flour the germs may be distributed and, under certain conditions, multiply. They can survive in the dry end product. If eggs are then used to prepare the dough in the kitchen, tasting the raw dough can also potentially lead to a *salmonella* infection.

DANGER IN DISGUISE

Food monitoring authorities in Germany have repeatedly found STEC in flour, baking mixtures, and dough samples in recent years. It is not possible to detect STEC by merely looking at or smelling the food. An infection can cause mild to severe diarrhoea. Particularly vulnerable groups such as children may also be at risk of developing hemolytic-uremic syndrome, which can have serious consequences. The disease manifests itself in acute kidney failure, blood

clotting disorders, and the destruction of red blood cells, and can even prove fatal. Infected adults may not experience any symptoms. It is therefore important to resist temptation and never sample raw dough, regardless of whether it has been prepared with or without egg. —

More information



BfR-FAQ
"Escherichia coli in
flour and dough"

TIPS TO PROTECT AGAINST A STEC/EHEC INFECTION FROM FLOUR

- After contact with flour, thoroughly wash hands with soap and water and dry them.
- Avoid contact between flour and food intended for direct consumption, and use separate boards, plates, bowls, and mixing devices.
- Thoroughly clean working area and other objects with detergent and warm water following contact with flour, and dry them.
- Never consume raw bread, cake, pizza or cookie dough.
- As a rule, people with weakened immune systems as well as small children should never consume raw dough.