

Campylobacteriosis – Factsheet

What is *Campylobacter*?

When your doctor says that you have campylobacteriosis, the doctor means that you have an intestinal or stomach infection with bacteria called *Campylobacter*.

What are the symptoms of *Campylobacter* infection?

Campylobacteriosis causes mild or severe diarrhea, often with traces of blood in the stool (feces). Sometimes people develop fever. Symptoms usually appear 2 to 5 days after the exposure.

How is *Campylobacter* spread?

Campylobacter is usually spread by eating or drinking contaminated or “dirty” food or water. Sometimes, it is also spread through contact with infected animals. Animals such as pigs, cattle, dogs, cats, and birds (particularly poultry such as chicken and turkey) may carry the bacteria in their intestines. These sources may contaminate meat products (especially poultry), water supplies, milk, and other foods.

How long are people contagious?

Generally, infected people will continue to pass the bacteria in their stool for a few days to a week or more. Certain antibiotics may shorten this phase.

Who gets *Campylobacter*?

Anyone can get *Campylobacter* infection.

What treatment is available for people with *Campylobacter*?

Most *Campylobacter* infections will go away without treatment. However, there are some instances where your health care provider may recommend treatment with antibiotics to make you feel better sooner and shorten the time *Campylobacter* is present in your stool. People with diarrhea should drink plenty of fluids.

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work, or daycare?

Since the bacteria are passed in stool, people with diarrhea should be excluded from daycare, patient care, and food handling activities. Most infected people may return to work or school when their diarrhea stops, provided that they carefully wash their hands after using the toilet and before preparing food.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting *Campylobacter*?

You can decrease your chance of coming into contact with *Campylobacter* using the following practices:

- Always treat raw poultry, beef, and pork as if they are contaminated.
- Wash hands frequently with water and soap. Especially after using the toilet, changing a diaper, or before preparing and/or eating food. (Sanitizing gel may be substituted when hands are not visibly soiled.)
- Avoid food or water from sources that may be contaminated.
- Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping on other foods.
- Refrigerate foods promptly; do not hold foods at room temperature for greater than two hours.
- Immediately wash cutting boards and counters used for preparation to prevent cross contamination with other foods.
- Ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature is reached, particularly when using a microwave for cooking.