

Fact Sheet: Campylobacter

What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacter is a bacterial infection caused by bacteria known as *Campylobacter jejuni*. Even a small amount of Campylobacter organisms can lead to infection. It is one of the most common causes of diarrhea illness in the United States.

Signs and Symptoms

- Stomach ache
- Fever
- Diarrhea that may contain blood
- Nausea
- Vomiting

The symptoms usually occur 2 to 5 days after exposure and may last up to a week. Some people may be infected with the bacteria and not feel sick, but can still spread the disease to others.

If you are a food service worker, a health care worker, or a childcare worker, report your illness to your supervisor and do not work until your medical provider says it is OK.

Prevention

- Wash your hands often, especially before preparing food and eating, working with animals, and after using the bathroom or changing diapers.
- Keep pets away from food preparation surfaces like cutting boards and countertops.
- Consume only pasteurized milk and dairy products.
- Do not drink water from unsafe or unknown sources.
- Thoroughly cook all eggs, meat, and poultry.

How is it spread?

Campylobacter is spread through direct contact with the bacteria. You can become infected by:

- Eating food contaminated with the bacteria — most often undercooked meat and poultry
- Drinking contaminated water or unpasteurized milk
- Cutting poultry meat on a cutting board, and then using the unwashed cutting board or utensil to prepare vegetables or other raw or lightly cooked foods
- Swimming in a lake, river or pool with campylobacter contamination and accidentally ingesting water.
- Contact with infected pets (mainly puppies and kittens) as well as farm animals (especially chickens and cows)

Person to person transmission is uncommon except in the case of infants and others who are unable to control their bowel movements. People who are not treated can spread the bacteria for as long as 2-7 weeks.

Treatment

Campylobacter is diagnosed when a culture of a stool sample grows the bacterium on a media plate. Most infections are mild and clear up by themselves. Generally, the only treatment is drinking many fluids, such as water and rehydrating liquids, to replace body fluids lost due to diarrhea. Severe illness is treated with antibiotics. Take all medicines as prescribed by your physician even if you start to feel better.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care professional. For more information about communicable disease, speak to your health care provider or call the Ingham County Health Department at (517)-887-4308

Visit our website at <http://hd.ingham.org>

or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov

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