



Fact Sheet: Campylobacter

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What is Campylobacter (Campylobacteriosis)

It is an infectious disease caused by a bacteria called *Campylobacter*. It is a common cause of diarrhea worldwide and a major cause of traveler's diarrhea.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually start 2 to 5 days after being infected with a range of 1 to 10 days. Symptoms include:

- Stomach cramps
- Severe abdominal pain
- Fever
- Diarrhea that may be bloody
- Malaise
- Nausea and vomiting

How is it spread?

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

- Eating food contaminated with the bacteria — most often undercooked meat and poultry
- Drinking contaminated water or unpasteurized milk
- Contact with infected pets (especially puppies and kittens), as well as farm animals.

Person to person transmission is uncommon except in the case of infants and others who produce a large volume of diarrhea. People who are not treated can spread the bacteria for as long as 2-7 weeks.

How is Campylobacter diagnosed and treated?

The only way to tell if an illness is caused by this bacteria is to go to a doctor and give a stool

sample to be checked for the pathogen. Most people who have Campylobacteriosis recover without any specific treatment. Patients should drink plenty of fluids as long as the diarrhea lasts.

In more severe cases, doctors may give an antibiotic. It is important that a person take all the medicine even if they feel better. Stopping the antibiotic instead of completing it as instructed, may have a negative outcome such as the bacteria still being inside the body.

Food service workers, healthcare workers, or childcare workers must report their sickness to their immediate supervisor and not work until the illness is over. A medical provider must provide documentation that it is OK for the person to return back to work.

How is Campylobacter prevented?

- Cook all meat products thoroughly, especially poultry. All poultry should be cooked to reach an internal temperature of 165° F.
- Avoid cross contamination. Do not re-use utensils or cutting boards that had raw meat or poultry until they are washed in hot soapy water.
- Consume only pasteurized milk and dairy products.
- Don't drink water from unsafe or unknown sources.
- Take care of pets and provide them with proper veterinary care.
- Use good hygiene and wash hands after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before eating.

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