



Campylobacter Fact Sheet

What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacter is a gut infection that usually causes diarrhea. Bacteria called Campylobacter cause it. It usually occurs in the summer.

Who can be infected?

Anyone can become infected with the Campylobacter bacteria.

How are the bacteria spread?

The bacteria are spread by eating or drinking food or water that is contaminated by the feces (stool) of infected people or animals. Washing hands before preparing food and before eating is the best way to stop the spread of the bacteria.

What are the symptoms of Campylobacter infection?

The major symptom is diarrhea, which may be either mild or severe. Stomach cramps, fever, nausea, vomiting and generally “not feeling well” can also occur.

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How soon after infection does symptoms appear?

The symptoms usually start 2 to 5 days after infection.

Where are Campylobacter found?

Many animals, such as pigs, cows, dogs, and birds (especially chickens), carry the bacteria in their intestines. Infected animals may contaminate meat products, water supplies, milk, and other food items.

How long can a person spread Campylobacter?

People can spread the bacteria to others for a few days to several weeks after they are infected.

Should infected people be excluded from school or work?

Since the bacteria is passed in the feces, people with diarrhea (especially children in day care or people who handle food) should not go to school or work. Even after diarrhea ends, persons should carefully wash their hands after using the toilet.

What is the treatment for Campylobacter infection?

Most people get well on their own. Persons with diarrhea

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should drink plenty of liquids. Antibiotics are used to treat severe cases.

How can the spread of Campylobacter infection be stopped?

- Always refrigerate meat products. Never leave raw meats at room temperature.
- Always cook meat completely. Never eat raw meat.
- Always cook raw eggs or foods containing raw eggs well.
- Avoid using unpasteurized milk.
- Carefully wash hands before and after preparing food.
- Make sure children wash their hands carefully, especially after using the toilet or handling pets.
- Always wash hands with soap and warm water after using the toilet or changing diapers.

*For further information, contact the
Oklahoma City-County Health Department
(405) 425-4437*

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