

## Information on Campylobacter

### What is campylobacteriosis?

Campylobacteriosis is the most common bacterial cause of diarrheal illness in the United States. It is a bacterial infection that affects the intestinal tract and, rarely, the bloodstream. Most cases are seen in the summer months and occur as single cases or outbreaks.

### Who gets campylobacteriosis and how is the germ spread?

Anyone can get campylobacter infection. Campylobacter is generally spread by eating or drinking contaminated food or water and, occasionally, by contact with infected people or animals. Most cases of campylobacteriosis are associated with handling raw poultry or eating raw or undercooked poultry meat.

One way to become infected is to cut poultry meat on a cutting board, and then use the unwashed cutting board or utensil to prepare vegetables or other raw or lightly cooked foods.

### What are the symptoms of campylobacteriosis?

Campylobacteriosis may cause mild or severe diarrhea, often with fever and traces of blood in the stool. The illness typically lasts one week. Symptoms generally appear 2 to 5 days after exposure.

### Where is the campylobacteriosis germ found?

Many animals including, swine, cattle, dogs, and birds (particularly poultry) carry the germ in their intestines. These sources in turn may contaminate meat products (particularly poultry), water supplies, milk, and other items in the food chain.

### Do infected people need to be isolated or excluded from work or school?

Generally infected people will continue to pass the germ in their feces for a few days to a week or more. Since the organism is passed in the feces, only people with active diarrhea who are unable to control their bowel habits (infants, young children, certain handicapped individuals) should be isolated.

Most infected people may return to school or work once their stools are formed provided that they carefully wash their hands after toilet visits. Special considerations must be given to food handlers, health care workers, and children in day care. Food handlers and health care workers should be excluded until symptoms have

subsided. Infants in diapers preferably should not return to day care until they have received at least two days of antibiotic therapy or the diarrhea had subsided.

### What is the treatment for campylobacteriosis?

Most people infected with campylobacteriosis will recover on their own or require fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics are occasionally used to treat severe cases.

### How can campylobacteriosis be prevented?

1. Always treat raw poultry, beef, and pork as if they are contaminated:
  - Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping on other foods.
  - Refrigerate foods promptly.
  - Cutting boards and counters used in the preparation should be washed immediately after use to avoid cross-contamination with other foods.
  - Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats.
  - Ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature is reached-especially when cooking with a microwave oven.
2. Avoid eating raw eggs or undercooking foods containing eggs.
3. Avoid drinking raw milk.
4. Encourage careful handwashing before and after food preparation.
5. Make sure to wash hands after handling pets.