

Campylobacteriosis

FACT SHEET

What is Campylobacteriosis?

Campylobacteriosis is a disease caused by bacteria called *Campylobacter*. Symptoms include diarrhea, stomach cramps, fever, nausea, vomiting, and bloody stool that usually lasts 2-5 days. These symptoms may be mild or severe.

Who Can Get Campylobacteriosis?

Anyone can get a *Campylobacter* infection, however it is most common in children and young adults. Eating contaminated food, especially unpasteurized milk, non-chlorinated water and improperly cooked poultry, is a common way to get this disease. Even one drop of juice from raw chicken meat can infect a person. 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. The *Campylobacter* organisms from the raw meat can then spread to the other foods.

Some people have become infected from touching the infected stool of an ill dog or cat. People don't usually pass the germ to other people, but this can happen if the infected person is a small child or is producing a large amount of diarrhea that others touch.

What are the Symptoms?

Most people with campylobacteriosis have diarrhea, abdominal pain, and fever within 2 to 5 days after contacting the germ. The diarrhea may be bloody and can be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. The illness typically lasts 1 week. Some persons who are infected with *Campylobacter* don't have any symptoms at all.

What is the Treatment?

Almost all persons infected with *Campylobacter* will recover without any specific treatment. Patients should drink plenty of fluids as long as the diarrhea lasts. In more severe cases, antibiotics can be used. Sometimes antibiotics can shorten the duration of symptoms if they are given early in the illness. Individuals not treated can shed the organism in their stool for 2-7 weeks. Your doctor will make the decision about whether antibiotics are necessary.

How Can You Prevent Campylobacteriosis?

You can prevent campylobacteriosis by:

- Washing hands with soap and water after using the toilet, changing diapers, touching pets or their stool (e.g. after cleaning a litter box), and before preparing foods.
- Eating only well cooked meats, poultry, or eggs.
- Avoiding unpasteurized milk or cheese.
- Keeping raw foods away from cooked foods and by washing cutting boards, utensils, and hands.