



Campylobacter

February 2008

What is campylobacter?

Campylobacter gastroenteritis is a type of food poisoning caused by the bacteria *Campylobacter jejuni* and *Campylobacter coli*. Half of all reported bacterial intestinal infections in Australia are due to *Campylobacter* infection. About one quarter of these cases is in young children aged five years or younger but all age groups can be affected.

How do you get campylobacter?

Campylobacter bacteria are most commonly found in or on raw poultry. Other sources include:

- raw meats
- unpasteurised milk
- untreated water
- puppies and kittens
- wild animals and birds.

Campylobacter infections are usually caused by eating or drinking contaminated food or water or from contaminated surfaces via hand to mouth transfer.

What are the signs and symptoms of campylobacter?

Campylobacter infections are slow in onset. Symptoms usually develop between 2 - 5 days after contracting the infection and include:

- diarrhoea (may contain mucous and/or blood)
- abdominal pain (may be similar to appendicitis)
- vomiting
- fever
- nausea.

How do I get treated?

Campylobacter infections usually resolve without treatment and most people recover within 2 - 5 days.

- Drink plenty of fluids such as plain water or oral rehydration drinks (available from pharmacies).
- Antibiotics are usually not required. Consult your GP or a doctor of your choice.
- Avoid anti-vomiting or anti-diarrhoeal medications unless prescribed or recommended by a doctor.



What do I do if I have campylobacter?

- Do not go to work for at least 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- Do not handle or prepare food for the family or household for at least 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- Keep children home from school for at least 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- People in hospitals, nursing homes and other residential facilities should be nursed in their own room, with a private bathroom for at least 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- Immediately remove and wash any clothes or bedding contaminated with vomit or diarrhoea using soap and hot water.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner.

How do I reduce the risks of getting campylobacter?

- Wash hands with soap and water after changing nappies, after handling animals, birds or pets and before preparing or handling food or drinks. To wash your hands effectively, lather thoroughly with soap and running water for at least 15 seconds. Dry your hands with a clean single use towel (e.g. paper towel) and turn the tap off with the towel to avoid possible recontamination.
- If hand washing facilities are not available use an alcohol-based gel.
- Keep cold food below 5°C and hot food above 60°C.
- Make sure foods are thoroughly cooked.

Where can I find more information on campylobacter?

For further information contact your GP, a doctor of your choice or Health Direct (1800 022 222).

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http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/400/2/campylobacter_f.pm

