

What is campylobacter?

Campylobacter is the bacteria that is the most commonly identified cause of foodborne disease in the UK

What illness results from infection?

After the bacteria have been swallowed they multiply in the gut. Symptoms usually develop after about three days, although the incubation period (the time taken from swallowing the bacteria to becoming ill) can be as long as 11 days.

You may experience:

- Abdominal cramps
- Profuse diarrhoea – sometimes with blood
- Fever
- Nausea and vomiting are uncommon

Should I see my GP?

You should consult your GP if one or more of the following applies to you:

- there is blood in your diarrhoea
- you have severe abdominal pain
- the diarrhoea has lasted for 48 hours

How are infections treated?

Most people recover within about 4-7

days without any specific treatment. Extra fluids are important, especially for babies, children, pregnant women and the elderly. Clear fluids like water and diluted fruit juices are recommended.

All persons with diarrhoea should remain off work or school until they have had no symptoms for 48 hours.

Where does campylobacter come from?

Campylobacter can be found in the gut of many birds and animals, including cattle and domestic pets such as dogs. It grows best at the body temperature of birds, and many flocks of poultry carry it without being ill themselves.

How does it spread?

Campylobacter can be passed on to humans via raw and undercooked meat, especially poultry. You can also become ill after drinking untreated water, or unpasteurised milk. It is rare to catch it from another person unless standards of personal hygiene are low.

How can infection be prevented?

Because many animals carry it, campylobacter is widespread in nature, and it is not possible to get rid of them. However there is a lot you can do to prevent them spreading and causing illness:

- Cook food thoroughly and pay particular attention to defrosting before cooking frozen foods.
- Use separate chopping boards for cooked and uncooked meats, and raw vegetables.
- Carefully clean all chopping boards, utensils and kitchen surfaces with hot water and detergent after use.
- Cover and store raw meat separately from other produce in the fridge, preferably on the bottom shelf to prevent juices dripping on cooked or ready to eat foods.
- Avoid eating or drinking unpasteurised milk, or cheese made from unpasteurised milk.
- Thoroughly wash all salad /raw vegetables and fruit
- If you are served undercooked poultry (juices still pink) in a restaurant, send it back to the kitchen.
- Wash hands thoroughly after contact with all animals and their faeces, after using the toilet or changing nappies.

How should hands be washed?

Always use warm, running water and a mild, preferably liquid, soap. (It is not necessary to use soaps labelled as antiseptic or antibacterial.)

- Wet hands and apply a small amount of soap
- Rub hands together vigorously for 10-15 seconds
- Pay special attention to areas between fingers, finger tips, and palms.
- Rinse hands under warm running water
- Dry thoroughly on a clean dry towel.

For further information see:

<http://www.washyourhandsofthem.com/hand-hygiene--you/how-to-wash-your-hands.aspx>

www.foodstandards.gov.uk

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Health Protection Team
Directorate of Public Health &
Health Policy
NHS Highland
Assynt House
Beechwood Park
Inverness
IV2 3BW

Further copies of this leaflet can be obtained from:

Tara MacKintosh
Administrative Assistant
Tel: 01463 704886
E-mail: tara.mackintosh1@nhs.net

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