



Prevent • Promote • Protect

Public Health Fact Sheet

Campylobacter

What is campylobacter?

- Campylobacter is a germ that causes an infection of the intestines.

What are the symptoms of campylobacter infection?

- Most people infected with campylobacter get diarrhea, cramping, abdominal pain, and fever within two to five days after exposure. The diarrhea may be bloody and can be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. The illness typically lasts about one week.

How is campylobacter spread?

- People can get campylobacter infection from eating contaminated foods – primarily raw or under-cooked poultry. Other foods can be cross-contaminated from surfaces that have been in contact with raw poultry. Outbreaks of campylobacter have been associated with raw (unpasteurized) milk.
- Food also may become contaminated by the hands of food handlers who are infected with campylobacter and did not wash their hands thoroughly after using the bathroom.
- People with campylobacter infection can spread the illness to others if they do not wash their hands thoroughly or if someone else is helping to care for their diarrhea illness.
- Animals can also be infected with campylobacter, and some people have acquired their infection from contact with the stool of an ill dog or cat.

What should I do if I think I have campylobacter infection?

- Consult your doctor or health care provider.
- Do not prepare food for others while you have diarrhea and for at least 48 hours after your diarrhea resolves.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom.
- Avoid contact with infants or people with a weakened immune system until your diarrhea has resolved.

How is campylobacter infection treated?

- Most people with campylobacter infection get better on their own. People with severe diarrhea need to drink extra fluids to avoid dehydration.
- In more severe cases, antibiotics can shorten the duration of symptoms if given early in the illness. Your doctor will decide whether antibiotics are necessary.

How is campylobacter infection diagnosed?

- Many different illnesses can cause diarrhea or abdominal cramps. Laboratory testing of stool is necessary to diagnose Campylobacter infection.

How do you prevent campylobacter infection?

- Cook all poultry products thoroughly to safe temperature as measured with a food thermometer.
- Wash hands, kitchen work surfaces, cutting boards and utensils with soap and water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry.
- Be particularly careful when handling foods prepared for infants, the elderly, and individuals with weakened immune systems.
- Avoid consuming raw (unpasteurized) milk.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap after handling pets or pet stool.

More information on campylobacter: www.cdc.gov/DiseasesConditions/

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