

# Campylobacteriosis General Information

## 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 last 2-5 days. These symptoms may be mild or severe.

## How is it spread?

Eating undercooked and/or raw food contaminated with *Campylobacter* bacteria, especially unpasteurized milk, consuming untreated drinking water and cross-contaminating ready-to-eat and lightly cooked foods with contaminated raw foods or the surfaces and utensils used to prepare them are common ways to get this disease.

Some people have become infected from touching the infected stool of an ill dog or cat.

## Who can get campylobacteriosis?

Anyone can get a *Campylobacter* infection, however it is most common in children and young adults.

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 primary care providers will make the decision about whether antibiotics are necessary.

## How can you prevent campylobacteriosis?

- Use a thermometer to ensure all foods have reached the [required internal cooking temperature](#) and reheat all food to an internal temperature of 74°C [165°F].
- Keep perishable food in a refrigerator at or below 4°C [40°F] and separate raw meat from ready-to-eat foods during thawing and storage.

- Wash raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly with clean, safe running water before you prepare and eat them.
- Adequately wash hands before preparing food and after handling raw meat, using the bathroom, changing diapers, handling garbage and handling pet food and treats.
- Thoroughly clean work surfaces and utensils used to prepare raw meat and other foods before using to prepare foods that are cooked lightly or ready-to-eat.
- Eat and drink only pasteurized juice, cider, milk and milk products.
- Keep pets away from food storage and preparation areas and adequately wash hands after handling pet feces and cat litter.
- Drink water from a safe, treated water supply.
- Avoid swallowing water if you are swimming or bathing in untreated water (natural swimming areas) and do not swim in pools or natural swimming areas if you have diarrhea.
- When travelling, in particular in developing countries, drink water (including ice) from a safe source. Eat only cooked hot food. Eat only fruit that can be peeled.

For further education please refer to Health Canada's [Campylobacter](#) website and the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Campylobacter Fact Sheet](#).