






Campylobacter

Facts about Campylobacter

Campylobacter is a bacteria that can cause illness, especially diarrhea. About 10,000 cases of campylobacter infection are reported in the U.S. every year. Thousands of cases are not reported. Campylobacter is the most common cause of diarrheal illness caused by bacteria in the United States.

Some important things to know about campylobacter infection are:

- Symptoms include fever, abdominal cramps and diarrhea that begin 2 to 5 days after a person is infected. The diarrhea may have blood and there might be vomiting. Symptoms usually last 1 week.
- Campylobacter is diagnosed by a laboratory test of the stool.
- People who have severe diarrhea for more than a day or two should go to a doctor or clinic.
- Rarely, the infection may spread from the intestines to the blood stream, and then to other parts of the body. Infants, elderly people and people with weak immune systems are more likely to develop a severe illness from campylobacter.

The spread of Campylobacter

Campylobacter can be spread by the following:

- **Undercooked poultry and unpasteurized milk**
- **Feces of infected people** who do not wash their hands after using the bathroom and before preparing food, or if diapers are not changed carefully
- **Raw meat** (even though the animals are healthy before slaughtering)
- **Unwashed, uncooked vegetables and fruits**
- **Feces of pets especially birds, puppies, and kittens**
- **Water that has been contaminated by animal feces**

Treatment for diarrhea caused by campylobacter

Diarrhea caused by campylobacter usually goes away in 2 to 5 days without treatment.

There is no vaccine to prevent campylobacter.

Antibiotics are not necessary for most people. Antibiotics may be given to people who have severe symptoms or who are at risk of developing serious complications - including infants, the elderly and those with weak immune systems.

If young children and babies have diarrhea and fever for more than a day, call your doctor or clinic.

Other treatment

- Do not use over the counter medicine to stop the diarrhea. It is better to allow the germs to travel through the body and leave the body in the feces.
- Eat light foods and liquids, such as gelatins, 7-Up® and Gatorade.®
- People who have severe diarrhea need large amounts of fluids. Sometimes intravenous (IV) fluids may be required.



Do not prepare or serve food if you have campylobacter.
Do not go to work in food service, childcare settings, or healthcare provider offices if you have diarrhea.

How to protect yourself and your family from campylobacter

Food — proper cooking of food completely kills the campylobacter bacteria.

- Cook foods completely and use a thermometer. Do not eat meat that is pink in the middle. Cook chicken to 165° F, internal temperature measured at the thickest part.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables in running water. Chicken does not need to be washed before cooking.
- Keep uncooked meats/poultry and their raw juices/marinades away from cooked foods.
Do not use the same dishes for raw food and cooked foods. Put cooked poultry in a clean serving dish.
- Thoroughly wash, using soap and warm water, utensils, cutting boards, work surfaces and hands after working with raw meat.
- Put all cooked foods into the refrigerator within two hours after cooking (one hour if it is a hot day.) Divide large quantities in smaller containers to cool quickly.
- Campylobacter has been found in unpasteurized milk and untreated water supplies. Do not drink or eat food items from uninspected or unapproved sources.

Animal Care

- Wash hands carefully with soap and warm water after cleaning up animal feces or handling animals.



Rub both hands on the top and bottom with soap for 20 seconds.



Use paper towels or clean terry cloth towels for drying.



Use the paper towel to turn off the water faucet in a public place.

Wash hands carefully after bowel movements or changing diapers. Clean toilet with disinfectant. Clean toilet handle and faucets. Keep towels clean.

Campylobacter infection is a reportable illness

If you are diagnosed with campylobacter infection, your doctor will give a report to the County Health and Human Services Agency. You may be contacted to find out how you got infected. This helps prevent the illness from spreading to others.

For more information about this illness, see the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.CDC.gov.

To report campylobacter in San Diego County, call (619) 515-6620.

