

CAMPYLOBACTER FACTSHEET

What is *Campylobacter*?

Campylobacter is a type of bacteria that can cause illness in humans and animals. It is one of the most common causes of foodborne infections in the United States. The illness caused by *Campylobacter* is known as campylobacteriosis and occurs more frequently in the summer months than in the winter.

Who can get campylobacteriosis?

Anyone can get campylobacteriosis but those with compromised immune systems are at a greater risk for more serious infection, sometimes with potentially life-threatening complications.

What are the symptoms of campylobacteriosis?

People with campylobacteriosis usually have diarrhea (often bloody), fever, and stomach cramps. Nausea and vomiting may accompany the diarrhea. Some people experience complications, such as irritable bowel syndrome, temporary paralysis, and arthritis.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The symptoms generally appear two to five days after the exposure and last about one week.

How is campylobacteriosis spread?

Most *Campylobacter* infections are probably acquired by eating raw or undercooked poultry or eating something that touched it. *Campylobacter* can also be transmitted by eating other foods, including seafood, meat, and produce, through contact with animals who have been infected, or by drinking untreated water.

Campylobacteriosis does not usually spread from one person to another, but it is possible for it to be spread through contact with feces/poop from infected individuals.

Is there a vaccine for campylobacteriosis?

No, currently there is no vaccine to protect against campylobacteriosis.

How is campylobacteriosis treated?

Most people recover from *Campylobacter* infection without antibiotic treatment. Patients should drink extra fluids for as long as diarrhea lasts. Some people with, or at risk for, severe illness might need antibiotic treatment. These people include those who are 65 years or older, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems, such as those with a blood disorder, with AIDS, or receiving chemotherapy. Your physician will decide if antibiotics are necessary.

How can people protect themselves against campylobacteriosis?

The following steps can protect you against campylobacteriosis:

- Avoid consuming raw or undercooked poultry. Cook all meat thoroughly and keep other food from touching raw poultry when shopping, cooking, and storing food.
- Refrigerate perishable foods promptly; minimize holding at room temperature.
- Wash hands, cutting boards and other kitchen work surfaces and utensils with soap and hot water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry to prevent cross-contamination.
- Do not drink unpasteurized milk or untreated surface water.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, scrubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds, before preparing or eating food and after contact with pet feces.

Where can I get more information?

Information about campylobacter and other related health topics can be found at www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of District residents. For additional information, please visit <https://dchealth.dc.gov> or call (202) 442-9021.