

CAMPYLOBACTER FACT SHEET

What is *Campylobacter*?

Campylobacter is a type of bacteria that can cause illness in humans and animals. *Campylobacter* is one of the most common causes of foodborne infections in the United States. The bacteria can be found in almost all raw poultry because it lives in the gastrointestinal tract of healthy birds. The illness caused by *Campylobacter* is known as campylobacteriosis. Campylobacteriosis occurs more frequently in the summer months than in the winter.

Who can get campylobacteriosis?

Anyone.

What are the symptoms of campylobacteriosis?

Campylobacteriosis may cause mild or severe diarrhea, often with fever, and abdominal cramps. The diarrhea may be bloody and can be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. Some infected persons do not have any symptoms. Persons with compromised immune systems are at a greater risk for more serious infection.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms generally appear 2–5 days after the exposure.

How does *Campylobacter* spread?

Most cases of campylobacteriosis are associated with eating raw or undercooked poultry meat or from cross-contamination of other foods by these items. Even one drop of juice from a piece of raw infected chicken or pork can make a person ill. Animals can also be infected, and some people get infected from contact with the stool of an ill dog or cat. The organism is not usually spread from one person to another, but this can happen if the infected person has a lot of diarrhea.

How is campylobacteriosis treated?

Most people with campylobacteriosis will recover within 2–5 days without any specific treatment other than adequate fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics are occasionally used to treat people with severe illness. Your health care provider will decide if antibiotics are necessary. Rarely, *Campylobacter* infection results in long-term consequences.

How can a person protect themselves against campylobacteriosis?

The following steps can protect you against campylobacteriosis:

- Cook all meats thoroughly.
- 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 the District residents. For additional information, please visit www.doh.dc.gov or call (202) 442-9371.