



CAMPYLOBACTERIOSIS

What is campylobacteriosis?

Campylobacteriosis is an infectious illness caused by bacteria called *campylobacter*. *Campylobacter* is a leading cause of diarrhea and food-borne illness, affecting persons of all ages. It occurs most commonly in the summer months.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of campylobacteriosis may include: diarrhea, abdominal pain and/or cramping, generalized weakness and fever. The diarrhea may be bloody and can be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. Signs of illness usually begin 1-10 days (average 2-5 days), after being exposed to the bacteria. Some persons infected with *campylobacter* do not appear ill and have no symptoms. The illness typically lasts about 1 week. In adults, it is not unusual for symptoms to last for an extended period and to come and go over several weeks. Long-term consequences to *campylobacter* infection are rare.

How is it spread?

Campylobacter lives in the intestines of birds (specifically poultry) and other animals. Many farm animals and meat sources harbor the organism. Pets, especially young animals such as puppies and kittens, are potential sources of infection. Animals may or may not have symptoms. *Campylobacter* can be found in water, food, soil, or surfaces that have been contaminated with the feces of infected humans or animals.

Most cases of campylobacteriosis are related to the handling of raw or undercooked poultry. Cross-contamination of kitchen surfaces is one way a person can become infected. A single drop of chicken juice on a cutting board can contaminate any fresh vegetable or fruit that comes in contact with it. *Campylobacter* is usually not spread person to person. However, this can happen if infected persons fail to adequately wash their hands.

How can campylobacteriosis be treated?

Most persons infected with campylobacter will recover without any specific treatment within 10 days (usually 2-5 days). In more severe cases, antibiotics may be prescribed early in the illness to possibly shorten the duration of symptoms. Over-the-counter medications, such as Pepto-Bismol or Kaopectate, should only be used with the advice of a physician. It is important to avoid self-treatment of any diarrheal illness.

Persons not treated with antibiotics can shed the organism in their stool for a period of 2 to 7 weeks. During this time, the bacteria can be spread to others.

How can campylobacteriosis be prevented?

Anyone can get campylobacteriosis. It is more common in children under 5 years and in young adults. Those persons at higher risk of spreading the germs to others include: food handlers, health care workers and child care providers. All persons who handle food as part of their job should not work if they have nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. As always, all children and adults should stay home and away from others until symptoms have stopped. Medical follow-up is needed to determine the need for treatment.

TIPS FOR PREVENTION

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds:
 - ✓ after handling fruits, vegetables and raw meat.
 - ✓ after using the bathroom
 - ✓ after changing diapers
 - ✓ after touching animals
 - ✓ before eating
- Cook all meat, especially poultry products, thoroughly. Make sure all meat is cooked throughout (no longer pink) and the juices are clear.
- Prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen by:
 - ✓ Using separate cutting boards for foods of animal origin and other foods.
 - ✓ Avoiding contact of fruits and vegetables with the juices of raw poultry.
 - ✓ Proper cleaning all cutting boards, countertops and utensils with soap and hot water after preparing raw meat or other foods containing animal products
- Avoid drinking unpasteurized milk and untreated surface water.
- Wash hands with *soap* after having contact with animals or animal feces, *especially puppies, kittens or other young animals* with diarrhea.
- Launder clothes properly after handling farm animals or any animal with diarrhea.
- Recognize illness in your pets. Regular veterinary care is important.
- Avoid activities that involve food preparation or the care of others if you have symptoms of intestinal illness (fever, diarrhea, vomiting).
- *Always...* practice good hygiene and be a good role model to others.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

SCHD Communicable Disease Unit 330-375-2662

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov
Mayo Clinic www.mayoclinic.com
Minnesota Department of Health www.health.state.mn.us