



# Campylobacter

## What is campylobacteriosis?

Campylobacteriosis is a bowel infection caused by the bacteria *Campylobacter*.

## How is it spread?

People become infected by swallowing the bacteria. Most cases are associated with handling or eating raw or undercooked poultry meat.

Animals can be infected and some people have acquired the infection from contact with the infected faeces of an ill animal.

Campylobacteriosis can also spread from person to person via contaminated faeces.

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms generally develop between 1-10 days, most commonly 2-5 days, after the person is exposed.

Symptoms include diarrhoea (which may be bloody), cramping, abdominal pain, fever, nausea and vomiting.

Most people recover within 2 to 5 days although sometimes it may take up to 10 days. Many infected people may have no symptoms at all.

## What is the infectious period?

While the *Campylobacter* bacteria remain in their faeces, infected people can pass the infection onto others. This can be from a few days to weeks after the symptoms have gone. The risk of infecting others decreases markedly after the diarrhoea has settled.

## Who is at risk?

Anyone can become infected with *Campylobacter*, however the young, the elderly and malnourished people are most at risk of contracting severe disease.

## What is the treatment?

Antibiotics are not usually recommended, nor required, except in severe cases.

Anyone with diarrhoea should drink extra fluids to avoid dehydration. Children with diarrhoea, who vomit or who refuse extra fluids should see a doctor. Anyone with prolonged or severe diarrhoea, or who has symptoms that concern them, should see a doctor.

Medicines to prevent vomiting or diarrhoea should not be given, especially to children, except where specifically advised by a doctor.

## How can campylobacteriosis be prevented?

Good hygiene and food handling practices are the best way to prevent campylobacteriosis.

Hands should be washed thoroughly with warm soapy water:

- after going to the toilet
- before preparing or handling food
- after handling raw poultry and meats
- after every nappy change
- after touching soiled linen
- after touching animals.

In the kitchen:

- cook all poultry thoroughly (no longer pink) and the juices run clear
- use separate cutting boards for meat and other foods
- carefully clean all cutting boards, counter tops and utensils with soap and hot water after preparing meat
- avoid drinking unpasteurised milk and untreated surface water.

Other measures include:

- never change nappies on tables or counters where food is prepared or eaten
- clean change areas with warm soapy water and disinfectant after every nappy change
- clean books, toys, equipment, furnishings, floors and toilets regularly (including toilet door handles)
- people with diarrhoea should not prepare or handle food that will be eaten by others.

### How can it be controlled?

- anyone with diarrhoea should not attend work until the diarrhoea has ceased
- children with diarrhoea should not attend childcare or school until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 24 hours

- anyone with diarrhoea should not swim, wade or paddle in public pools.

### For more information contact your nearest Centre for Disease Control.

Darwin	8922 8044
Katherine	8973 9049
Nhulunbuy	8987 0359
Tennant Creek	8962 4259
Alice Springs	8951 7549

Disease Control fact sheets on various topics are available by contacting your nearest centre or from our web site at [http://www.health.nt.gov.au/Centre\\_for\\_Disease\\_Control/Publications/index.aspx](http://www.health.nt.gov.au/Centre_for_Disease_Control/Publications/index.aspx)

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