

CAMPYLOBACTER

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacter is a bacterial infectious disease. It is one of the most common diarrhea illnesses in the United States. Some persons infected with campylobacter have no symptoms while other may experience mild to severe symptoms.

How is it spread?

Campylobacter is spread by eating food that is contaminated with the bacteria (these germs are often found in undercooked meat and poultry), or by drinking contaminated water and unpasteurized milk. It can also be spread from contact with feces of infected dogs, cats and other animals. This organism is not readily transmitted from person to person except from infected children in diapers.

How is it treated?

Campylobacter is usually diagnosed by a stool culture performed at a laboratory. Mild campylobacter infection will clear up by itself. However, infected persons need to drink plenty of fluids as long as the diarrhea lasts. Antibiotics may be prescribed by a physician for more severe cases of campylobacter. They may help shorten the duration of illness and prevent relapse if they are started early in the illness.

How can we prevent Campylobacter?

- Wash hands with soap and water after toileting, before food preparation and after contact with animals or animal feces.
- Wash cooking utensils, cutting boards, and counter tops that come in contact with raw meat or poultry, with hot soapy water.
- Use separate cutting boards for foods of animal origin and other foods.
- Avoid drinking unpasteurized milk and contaminated water.
- Thoroughly cook all poultry, meats and eggs.
- Symptomatic food handlers, hospital patient care workers, day care center workers and day care attendees should be excluded until diarrhea has subsided.

SYMPTOMS OF CAMPYLOBACTER

- diarrhea (possibly bloody)
- abdominal pain
- fever
- fatigue
- nausea & vomiting

Symptoms usually subside in 2-5 days, however, recovery can take up to 10 days.

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