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# Campylobacter



**If you have any further questions,  
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This leaflet contains information about Campylobacter  
- what it is and how it affects people

# 1 What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacter bacteria cause food poisoning. Anyone can get campylobacter, but young children under 5 years of age, those over 60 and travellers to developing countries are at greater risk.

# 2 How do you get infected with campylobacter?

You usually get infected by eating contaminated food. Campylobacter is particularly found in raw poultry and is common in other raw meat. You can also get campylobacter from infected pets and other animals. Cross contamination from meat to other foodstuffs in the kitchen is a particular problem.

# 3 How can you avoid getting infected with campylobacter?

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water:
  - before preparing and eating food
  - after handling raw food
  - after going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy
  - after contact with pets and other animals
  - after working in the garden
- Keep cooked food away from raw food; store raw foods below cooked or ready-to-eat foods in the fridge to prevent contamination
- Cook food thoroughly, especially meat, so that it is piping hot, as this will destroy any campylobacter and other food borne bacteria.
- Keep all kitchen surfaces and equipment including knives, chopping boards, and dish cloths clean
- Do not drink untreated water from lakes, rivers or streams
- Pay special attention to hygiene during farm visits, washing hands after any contact with animals, and eating only in designated areas
- If someone has campylobacter wash clothes and linen in the hottest cycle of the washing machine possible. Clean toilet seats, toilet bowls, flush handles, taps and wash hand basins after use with detergent and hot water, followed by a household disinfectant

# 4 What are the symptoms of campylobacter and how long do they last?

Symptoms include diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pains and cramps, fever, and generally feeling unwell. They usually develop within two to five days, but can take as long as 10 days.

If you have concerns about your health contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647, visit their website <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk>, or see your family doctor.

# 5 How do you treat campylobacter?

Most people recover without treatment within two to five days, although it can sometimes take up to 10 days to get better. Drinking plenty of fluids is important as diarrhoea or vomiting can lead to dehydration. Your doctor may recommend a re-hydration solution, available from your pharmacist.

# 6 Do you need to stay off work or school?

While you are ill and have symptoms you are infectious. You can return to work or school once you have been free from diarrhoea for 48 hours.

You should tell your employer you have had campylobacter infection if you work with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the young, those in poor health, or handle food.

More information about the Health Protection Agency and campylobacter is available on our website at <http://www.hpa.org.uk>

# 7 The Health Protection Agency and Campylobacter

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