

6 Campylobacteriosis

- Refrigerate raw foods below cooked or ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination
- Store foods below 5°C or above 60°C to prevent growth of bacteria
- Thoroughly wash raw vegetables before eating
- Reheat food until the internal temperature of the food reaches at least 75°C
- Protect food from insects, rodents and other animals

Note for microwave oven users

Part of the microwave cooking process includes standing time. When using a microwave, read the manufacturer's instructions carefully and observe these standing times to ensure the food is completely cooked before it is eaten.

Household cleaning

Bathrooms and toilets must be cleaned often, to avoid the spread of bacteria. Pay particular attention to surfaces such as toilet seats and handles, taps and nappy change tables.

Sandpits can become contaminated with animal faeces and urine. Rake the sand frequently and remove any animal faeces. Cover the area when not in use.

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Water from untreated sources

Untreated water that comes directly from lakes or rivers may be contaminated with faeces from people or animals. Boil water from these sources before drinking it.

If you think the source of your illness may have been food, it is important that you report it to your local council health department as soon as possible. Retain (and refrigerate) any left over food which you believe may have caused you to become ill.

Further information

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Communicable Disease
Prevention and Control Unit
Department of Human Services

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What is Campylobacteriosis?

Campylobacteriosis is a type of gastro (gastroenteritis) caused by the germ (bacteria) *Campylobacter*. Campylobacteriosis can affect anyone, however, they are more common in children under five years of age and young adults. The symptoms are often more severe in the elderly and people with other medical conditions.

What are the symptoms of Campylobacteriosis?

The most common symptoms of Campylobacteriosis are diarrhoea (which may contain blood or mucus), fever, stomach cramps, nausea and vomiting.

After the bacteria are taken in by mouth, it usually takes between two and five days before you become ill (although this may range from 1 to 10 days). To trace the cause of the illness, it is necessary to know where you were and what you ate and drank in the week before you became ill.

Where are *Campylobacter* found?

Campylobacter bacteria are found in animals such as poultry, birds, cattle and household pets including puppies and kittens.

How does Campylobacteriosis spread?

Campylobacteriosis infection occurs when *Campylobacter* bacteria are taken in by mouth and it may happen in any of the following ways:

Inadequate cooking

Campylobacter bacteria are often present in uncooked meat, particularly poultry. When the raw meat is prepared for human consumption and is not adequately cooked, the bacteria may survive and infect people who eat it. Unpasteurised milk can also be contaminated with *Campylobacter* bacteria.

Cross-contamination

Cross-contamination is the spread of bacteria from something that is contaminated with bacteria, to something that is not.

Campylobacter can spread when uncooked foods contaminated with the bacteria cross-contaminate ready-to-eat foods, either directly or via utensils and equipment used to prepare raw foods (eg. knives, chopping boards). Water can also be contaminated with *Campylobacter*.

To avoid cross-contamination, raw foods should always be handled and stored separately from cooked or ready-to-eat foods.

Person-to-person spread

People with Campylobacteriosis have *Campylobacter* bacteria in their faeces. If these people do not wash their hands after going to the toilet, then contaminated hands can spread the bacteria to surfaces and objects which will be touched by other people.

Contaminated hands can also spread the bacteria to food which may be eaten by other people.

Hands can also become contaminated with bacteria when a person changes the nappy of an infant with *Campylobacter* infection.

People and animals can carry *Campylobacter* in their faeces without having any symptoms at all, or for some weeks after symptoms have stopped. These people and animals can still pass the disease on to others.

I think I may have Campylobacteriosis – what should I do?

If you have symptoms of Campylobacteriosis, report them to your doctor immediately. This will ensure that you receive proper treatment and advice, and that steps are taken to avoid the spread of the disease.

Can I still work?

Food handlers, child care workers and health care workers with Campylobacteriosis should not work until symptoms have stopped.

Children must not attend child care centres, kindergartens or school until symptoms have stopped.

How can I stop spreading it to others?

The risk of spreading *Campylobacter* to others can be reduced.

It is very important that people with Campylobacteriosis do not prepare or handle food which will be eaten by other people, and that no one shares their towel or face washer.

How can I avoid getting Campylobacteriosis?

By following the guidelines below, everyone can do something to avoid getting Campylobacteriosis.

Careful hand washing

Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water for at least 15 seconds:

- before preparing food
- between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods
- before eating
- after going to the toilet or changing nappies
- after working in the garden
- after contact with animals or their faeces

Food handlers should use disposable paper towels or an air dryer to dry their hands. Cloth towels are not recommended as they get dirty quickly and can spread germs from one person to another.

Safe food storage and handling

- Do not handle cooked foods with the same implements (tongs, knives, cutting boards) used on raw foods, unless they have been thoroughly washed between uses
- Keep all kitchen surfaces and equipment clean
- Defrost food by placing it in a container on the lower shelves of a refrigerator or use a microwave oven
- Thoroughly cook all raw foods, particularly poultry. Make sure that the meat is cooked throughout (no longer pink) and that the juices run clear
- Place cooked food in a refrigerator within an hour of cooking it