

# Campylobacter

## Fact Sheet



### What is *Campylobacter*?

*Campylobacter* are bacteria that cause diarrheal disease in humans. The bacteria are common in chickens, but don't make chickens sick.

### How is it spread?

*Campylobacter* is spread to people when they eat food that has not been well cooked, drink water that has the bacteria in it, or drink unpasteurized milk. *Campylobacter* is found in the feces of infected people and animals. Sometimes it can spread from person to person if a person has the bacteria on their hands and they do not wash their hands well after using the toilet or changing diapers. People can also be infected by their pets.

### What are the signs and symptoms?

The most common symptom is diarrhea. The diarrhea may have blood in it. Other symptoms include stomach pains, tiredness, fever, nausea and vomiting.

### How will I know if I have an infection?

Your doctor's office will send a sample of your stool to the laboratory to be tested. It will take several days to do the test. Some people can have the disease and not have any symptoms.

### How is it treated?

Most people get over this infection without any treatment. A few can get very sick and may need antibiotics. People with *Campylobacter* should drink lots of fluids while they have diarrhea.

### How can I prevent illness?

- Always wash your hands with soap and water
  - Before eating, preparing food, and after preparing food, especially handling raw meat
  - After using the toilet, changing diapers
  - After touching pets or other animals (especially chickens)
- Cook all poultry (chicken and turkey) thoroughly. The meat should not be pink and the juices should be clear.
- Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw and cooked meat products and raw vegetables, fruit or cheese

- Use only clean utensils, dishes and cutting boards when cooking or preparing food
- Keep infants and children from touching raw poultry products and packaging
- Avoid eating raw shellfish
- Do not eat or drink unpasteurized dairy products, including raw milk
- Avoid drinking untreated water when hiking or camping
- Avoid swallowing water when swimming or boating
- If you are taking care of someone with *Campylobacter* infection wash your hands with soap and water after cleaning the bathroom, helping with toileting, changing diapers or handling soiled clothing or bed linens.

### What about work and daycare?

- Children with diarrhea should not attend daycare or school until the diarrhea stops
- People with *Campylobacter* should not work in food related businesses as food handlers or cooks until at least 24 hours after their diarrhea stops
- People who work in health care should not do patient care until their diarrhea stops

### How common is illness?

*Campylobacter* is one of the most common bacterial causes of diarrhea in the United States. The majority of cases occur as isolated cases, not part of outbreaks. Illness occurs more often in the summer months than the winter.

### Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821 or visiting [www.maine.gov/idepi](http://www.maine.gov/idepi). The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - <http://www.cdc.gov> - is another excellent source of health information.