



Campylobacter Facts



What is campylobacter?

Campylobacter are bacteria which, when swallowed, cause an illness in humans and animals called campylobacteriosis.

What causes campylobacter?

Most raw meats and their juices are contaminated with campylobacter bacteria, which are usually destroyed during cooking. Campylobacter bacteria may also be present in the stool of an infected person.

You may become infected with campylobacter by:

- Eating undercooked chicken, beef or pork
- Eating “ready-to-eat” foods, such as fruit or salad ingredients that have been contaminated with the juices of raw meats
- Eating or drinking raw eggs and egg products, and raw or unpasteurized milk
- Coming in contact with the stool of an infected person, child or infant (for example, during diaper changes)

- Drinking water that has not been properly disinfected and has been contaminated with the stool of an infected person or animal
- Physically handling infected animals or their waste products

What are the symptoms of campylobacter?

Diarrhea, abdominal pain, tiredness, muscle aches, fever, nausea and vomiting are common. You may have blood or mucous in liquid stools. Symptoms usually begin two to five days after you are exposed to the bacteria. Most people are mildly sick for about one week. Some people who are infected with campylobacter do not have any symptoms at all. However, in some people the bacteria is capable of causing more serious complications but this is rare.

How is campylobacter treated?

Your health care provider may suggest antibiotics or treatment to stop the symptoms, such as drinking more fluids to prevent dehydration.

How can I reduce the risk of campylobacter?

Cook all meat, especially poultry, to recommended temperatures.

Product	Celsius	Fahrenheit
Whole Chicken/Turkey	82	180
Poultry Breasts	74	165
Pork	71	160
Ground Meat	71-74	160-165

Clean and sanitize countertops and utensils after contact with raw meats and poultry, especially before using these areas or utensils to prepare 'ready-to-eat' foods or foods that will not be cooked any further.

Avoid using raw eggs in eggnogs, salad dressings, ice cream and desserts. Never use cracked or dirty eggs. Cook all egg products thoroughly; eggs cooked "over easy" or "sunny side up" are not fully cooked.

Drink only pasteurized milk and water from an approved or chemically treated source. If you are unsure of the safety of your water supply boil your water for one minute or use an approved disinfectant.

It is important to wash your hands before and after using the toilet, before preparing or eating meals, after changing diapers and after being in close contact with animals. It only takes a small amount of the bacteria to make you ill.

If you are infected with campylobacter and you provide services to others, particularly seniors or children, you should not go to work while you are having symptoms. Your employer will decide when it is safe for you to return to work. It is possible that even after you are feeling better you will still be shedding the bacteria in your stool for a period of time. To prevent spreading the disease to people around you always practice good hand washing and hygiene.

Adapted from: Simcoe-Muskoka Public Health Unit

