

Campylobacter

What is *Campylobacter*?

Campylobacter is a bacterium that causes an illness in people and animals. *Campylobacter* affects the stomach and intestines.

How do I get *Campylobacter*?

People must ingest (swallow or eat) the *Campylobacter* bacteria to become infected. *Campylobacter* is usually spread through the following:

- *Campylobacter* can be found in raw meats (especially poultry) and unpasteurized milk.
- Raw meats and their juices can spread the bacteria if they touch ready-to-eat foods (salads, breads, cheeses, etc.), food preparation surfaces and utensils (cutting boards, plates, knives, etc.) or hands.
- People who become infected with *Campylobacter* will have the bacteria in their feces (stools). If people do not properly wash their hands after using the restroom or changing diapers, and then handle food that others will eat or objects that others will put in their mouths (e.g., toys), they can spread the bacteria to other people.
- Pets can also be infected and can spread the bacteria to you through their feces.
- *Campylobacter* is **NOT** spread from one person to another by coughing or sneezing, sharing drinks, hugging or kissing.

Symptoms

Symptoms begin 1-10 days (usually 2-5 days) after ingesting the *Campylobacter* bacteria. Some infected people may not have any symptoms, but still are able to spread the bacteria. Symptoms include:

- Diarrhea – frequently bloody
- Fever
- Dehydration (due to diarrhea and vomiting)
- Stomach pain
- Nausea – sometimes with vomiting
- Feeling tired

Prevention

- Cook meats (especially poultry) until well done. Poultry is well done when it reaches 165°F or juices run clear.
- Do not drink unpasteurized milk.
- Wash hands and sanitize utensils and food preparation surfaces (especially cutting boards) after preparing raw meats.
- Always wash your hands after using the restroom. You may have and spread the bacteria even if you do not have any symptoms.
- Wash your hands and the child's hands after diapering or helping with toilet training.
- Wash hands after handling pets (or other animals) or cleaning up after animals.



Hand washing steps:

1. Use soap and warm running water.
2. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds; use a nail brush.
3. Wash all surfaces:
 - Between fingers
 - Under fingernails
 - Back of hands
 - Wrists
4. Rinse well and dry hands with a clean paper towel.

(continued on back)



**Tri-County Health
Department**

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Campylobacter (continued)

Treatment for *Campylobacter*

Most symptoms will go away on their own in 3-10 days. If symptoms persist or are severe, contact your health care provider.

If you think you have Campylobacter:

- Do not prepare food for others.
- If your job involves handling food or caring for small children, do not go to work and contact your health care provider.
- Children who might have *Campylobacter* should not go to child care settings – especially if they have diarrhea.