

Public Advisory Note 13 Campylobacter The Facts

WHAT IS **CAMPYLOBACTER** AND HOW TO AVOID IT

Food Poisoning is always in the news these days. In recent years, the germ or bacterium campylobacter has been increasingly recognised as a common cause of food poisoning in humans. This leaflet explains what campylobacter is and the simple precautions that you can take to reduce the risks of food poisoning.

WHAT IS **CAMPYLOBACTER**?

Campylobacter is a bacterium which can cause illness in both animals and man.

WHERE IS **CAMPYLOBACTER** FOUND?

Studies have shown that campylobacter can be isolated from raw poultry, un-pasteurised milk, infected animals such as dogs, cattle and cats and contaminated waters. Consumption of milk pecked by members of the crow family appears to be associated with an increase in cases in late spring.

HOW IS **CAMPYLOBACTER** SPREAD?

Campylobacter is spread in three ways

1. Hand to mouth when handling raw food i.e. meat or poultry.
2. Eating contaminated food (particularly poultry/meat) which has not been adequately cooked.
3. The bacteria can be transferred from one item of food to another i.e. cross contamination. This can occur where raw meat is stored beside cooked food or the same kitchen utensils are used to prepare both raw and cooked food.

THE TRANSMISSION OF **CAMPYLOBACTER** FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER IS RARE

WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

Campylobacter can affect anyone but in particular affects the very young (ages 0-5 years), the elderly and those who are suffering from other physical illnesses.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Campylobacter infection is characterised by severe abdominal cramps, fever and diarrhoea. The symptoms last from several days to three weeks.

HOW CAN I REDUCE THE RISK OF CAMPYLOBACTER INFECTION

Campylobacter infection can be reduced by cooking all poultry and meats thoroughly, drinking only pasteurised milk and avoiding untreated water supplies.

ADVISORY RULES OF THE KITCHEN

<p>One Always wash your hands before preparing food</p>
<p>Two Do not use the same knife and chopping board for cutting raw/ and cooked foods</p>
<p>Three Scrub vegetables to remove dirt</p>
<p>Four Store and prepare cooked food away from soft cheeses and raw food including vegetables</p>
<p>Five Check fridge and freezer are operating between 1°C -4° and -18° respectively</p>
<p>Six Go through your fridge regularly and throw away food beyond its eat by date</p>
<p>Seven Reheat food thoroughly, stir microwaved food to avoid cold spots and leave for the recommended standing times</p>
<p>Eight Don't let pets or pet food come into contact with your food, work surfaces or utensils</p>
<p>Nine Cook thoroughly. If you want to keep the food for later cool it quickly and refrigerate as soon as possible certainly within 1½ hours</p>
<p>Ten Avoid smoking when preparing food, it can spread bacteria when people touch their mouths</p>

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