

What is Campylobacter?

It is a bacterium (a germ), which is carried by birds, animals and domestic pets. If contracted by humans it can cause:

- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting (especially in children)
- Stomach pains and cramps
- High temperature

The incubation period (the time taken from swallowing the germs until the illness starts) can be between 1 and 10 days, but most cases occur between **2 - 5 days**.

Who can it affect?

ANYONE – But the very young and elderly are particularly vulnerable. The diarrhoea usually lasts for about 7 days, but symptoms can persist for longer. Prolonged illness and/or relapses may occur in adults.

Treatment is usually unnecessary unless severe or prolonged illness, Make sure you drink plenty of water.

How is Campylobacter caught?

By eating raw and undercooked food (particularly poultry), or by eating foods that have been contact with these.

By drinking un-pasteurised contaminated milk. Also untreated water.

By not washing hands after touching infected pets and animals, before eating or putting hands in mouth (so can be a particular problem in small children)

Occasionally person to person spread – but this is uncommon

How do you avoid catching it?

- By thoroughly cooking all foods, especially meat, until piping hot. Take extra care with poultry, pork, burgers and sausages, ensuring that the juices run clear. Always check BBQ meat!
- Make sure meat is fully thawed before cooking.
- Keep raw meat away from cooked foods and other ready to eat foods (foods that won't be cooked) e.g. salad, bread, cheese.
- Clean work surfaces, dishes and utensils thoroughly in hot water and detergent after they have been in contact with raw meat.
- Ideally use separate chopping boards for raw meat and ready to eat foods.
- Only drink pasteurised milk. Protect doorstep deliveries from birds and avoid drinking untreated water e.g. from streams and lakes.
- Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water and dry with a clean towel;
 - after going to the toilet
 - after changing a baby's nappy
 - after contact with pets and animals
 - before preparing and eating food
 - after handling raw food
- If on picnics with no water available to wash hands, use disposable travel wipes.
- Keep pets away from food, dishes and worktops.

Do you need to stay off work or school?

YES – Until you have been free from any symptoms for **48 hours**

Children should not play with other children or attend school or nursery until they are fully recovered and have been symptom free for **48 hours**.

If you work as a food handler, with young children or in healthcare, you must inform your employer and / or seek advice from your Environmental Health Dept.

If you or a member of your household has Campylobacter:

Ensure you and all household members wash their hands thoroughly with warm water and soap;

- After using or cleaning the toilet
- After attending to another person who has diarrhoea / vomiting
- After changing a baby's nappy
- After handling or washing soiled clothes and bedding
- Before eating or preparing food

Ensure each person affected has their own towel for drying hands.

Ensure young children are supervised when washing hands, or have their hands washed for them.

Wash soiled clothes, bedding and towels on a hot cycle of the washing machine. Keep soiled washing separate from the rest of the washing.

Clean toilet seats, flush handles and taps frequently with hot soapy water. The toilet bowl should be cleaned with a toilet brush and disinfectant. Wear rubber gloves to clean the toilet and keep them for this use only.

Where possible stay away from other people until your symptoms have stopped, especially vulnerable people like the elderly and very young. Where possible, do not prepare food for your family or anyone else

NB: If you are using a disinfectant, ensure that it confirms to a British Standard and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Keep all chemical cleaning agents in a safe place away from children.

For further advice or information contact:

*Your Community Infection Control Nurse at your
local Primary Care Trust (PCT),
Your Local Environmental Health Department or
Your local Health Protection Unit*

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The Health Protection Agency is a new independent organisation dedicated to protecting people's health. It brings together the expertise formerly in a number of official organisations.

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