

# Campylobacteriosis

***Campylobacteriosis is one of the most common causes of bacterial gastroenteritis in Australia, and is frequently associated with the consumption of contaminated poultry.***

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## What is campylobacteriosis?

Campylobacteriosis is a gastrointestinal disease caused by bacteria called *Campylobacter*. In Australia, *Campylobacter* is one of the most common causes of bacterial gastroenteritis and is frequently associated with the consumption of contaminated poultry. Infection can occur at any time of the year, but is more common in the warmer months.

## What are the symptoms?

Most people who become infected with *Campylobacter* will get diarrhoea, cramping, abdominal pain, and fever that lasts from one to two weeks. Symptoms usually develop within 2 to 5 days after infection. The diarrhoea may contain blood or mucous. In rare cases, *Campylobacter* can enter the bloodstream and cause more serious disease.

## How is it spread?

*Campylobacter* is mainly spread to humans by eating or drinking contaminated food (mainly poultry), water or unpasteurised milk. *Campylobacter* can also be spread via the hands of an infected person, or from contact with cats, dogs and farm animals that carry the bacteria.

## Who is at risk?

Anyone can get campylobacteriosis, although very young children, the elderly, people with poor immunity and people who work with farm animals are at greater risk of infection.

## How is it prevented?

### **Personal hygiene**

*Campylobacter* can be carried on your hands so it is important that hands are washed thoroughly with soap and warm water after going to the toilet, after changing infants in nappies, before handling and eating food, after handling raw food (especially raw poultry), after gardening and after contact with pets and other animals.

### **Cooking**

Thorough cooking of food kills *Campylobacter*. Avoid raw or undercooked meat, poultry or eggs. Poultry, including liver, should not be eaten if pink in the middle.

### **Food preparation**

To prevent the contamination of food:

- store raw foods (such as poultry and meat) in sealed containers in the bottom of the fridge or freezer to prevent any fluid dripping or spilling onto other ready-to-eat food. Cover all foods in the refrigerator and freezer to protect them from contamination

- wash hands immediately after going to the toilet or handling raw foods and before handling cooked or ready-to-eat food
- use different chopping boards, trays, utensils and plates when preparing raw foods and ready to eat food. If you have only one chopping board wash it well in hot soapy water before reuse
- thoroughly wash all dirt off any raw vegetables and fruits before preparing and eating them
- dry dishes with a different cloth to that used for wiping hands or bench tops; wash dish cloths regularly

People experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms should not handle or serve food, care for the elderly or children until 2 days after the symptoms have stopped.

### **Temperature control**

Food should not be left at temperatures that encourage the growth of *Campylobacter*. Refrigerated food should be kept at less than 5 degrees Celsius. Raw foods, especially poultry and meat, should be stored in sealed containers and shelved below cooked or ready-to-eat foods in the fridge to prevent cross-contamination. Cold foods that are to be served hot should be reheated quickly until all parts of the food are thoroughly heated. Hot foods should be kept at above 60 degrees Celsius until ready to eat.

### **How is it diagnosed?**

Your doctor or local hospital will request a stool sample to be collected for laboratory testing.

### **How is it treated?**

Most people will recover from campylobacteriosis with rest and fluids. It usually takes one week to recover, but can take as long as two weeks. Your doctor may recommend a rehydration solution, available from your pharmacist, to help with the dehydration resulting from the diarrhoea. In severe or complicated cases, your doctor may prescribe antibiotics to reduce the duration of the illness.

### **What is the public health response?**

Campylobacteriosis is notifiable in NSW. The local public health unit will investigate outbreaks to try identify a common exposure such as a food source. Where a common food is implicated the NSW Food Authority will undertake a further environmental investigation and initiate control measures.

For further information please call your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 or visit the New South Wales Health website [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)