



Campylobacter

Environmental Health Guide

Campylobacter gastroenteritis is a type of food poisoning caused by the bacteria *Campylobacter jejuni* and *Campylobacter coli*.

Half of all reported food poisonings in Australia are due to Campylobacter infection and of these approximately one quarter of cases are in young children aged five years or younger, but all age groups can be affected.

Campylobacter bacteria is most commonly found in or on raw poultry—other sources include

- lakes or rivers where water birds are found
- raw meats
- unpasteurised milk
- untreated water
- puppies and kittens
- wild animals and birds

Symptoms

Campylobacter infection usually develops between two and five days after eating contaminated food.

The symptoms vary from mild to very severe and include:

- diarrhoea (may contain mucus and blood)
- abdominal pain (may be similar to appendicitis)
- vomiting
- fever
- nausea

Symptoms usually stop suddenly after two to five days but, in some cases, may last longer. If you suffer from any of these symptoms consult your doctor immediately. You may be requested to provide a specimen to confirm if Campylobacter was the cause of the illness.

Handling Food

If you have Campylobacter and:

- are employed as a food handler
 - ✓ advise your employer. You must not return to work until 48 hours after you are symptom free.
 - ✓ advise your local government Environmental Health Officer so that the source of infection may be traced.
- prepare food for your family
 - ✓ if possible, have someone else prepare the food. Wash your hands thoroughly before handling food
 - ✓ advise the local government Environmental Health Officer so that the source of infection may be traced.



Protect Yourself from Campylobacter

Campylobacter infection can be avoided by following these simple rules.

1. **COOK** food thoroughly, especially chicken. Make sure meat and poultry reach at least 75°C in the centre.
2. **ALWAYS** wash your hands before handling food.
3. **PREVENT** sources of Campylobacter from contaminating ready-to-eat food.
 - √ Keep raw meat and poultry away from ready-to-eat food.
 - √ Clean and sanitise utensils and cutting boards that have been used to prepare raw meats.
 - √ Store ready-to-eat foods in the fridge in covered containers or wrapped to prevent contamination.
 - √ Cover all foods.
4. **AVOID** drinking:
 - × untreated water;
 - × unpasteurised milk.
5. **DEFROST** food safely either:
 - √ in the refrigerator; or
 - √ in the microwave oven on 'defrost' setting. **NEVER** defrost food at room temperature.
6. **BEWARE** pets carry bacteria so:
 - √ keep pets out of the kitchen when preparing food;
 - √ take your pet to the vet if it is sick;
 - √ wash your hands after touching pets or other animals.
7. **PROTECT** babies and young children. They are at greatest risk from Campylobacter infection so:
 - √ try to keep their hands clean after they have touched pets, been to the toilet etc;
 - √ wash your hands after changing nappies or dirty linen.
8. **RE-HEAT** leftover meat to steaming hot before eating:
 - √ discard leftover chicken after 24 hours;
 - √ heat meat in the microwave for at least two to three minutes, until it is steaming hot.

Further Information

For further information contact your Local Government Environmental Health Officer

or

Environmental Health Directorate
Department of Health
PO Box 8172
Perth Business Centre WA 6849

Phone: (08) 9388 4999
Facsimile: (08) 9388 4955

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