



Shire of Denmark

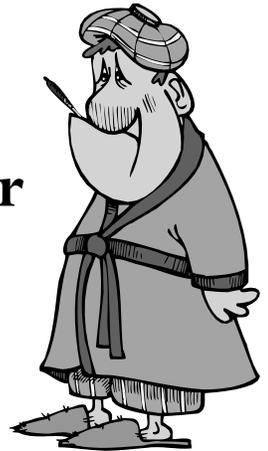
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Campylobacter



What is *Campylobacter*?

Campylobacter is a type of bacteria, which is harmful to man and gives rise to symptoms such as:

Diarrhoea
Fever
Abdominal pain
Nausea
Malaise
Vomiting
Headache

These symptoms are commonly referred to as gastroenteritis. There is usually a period of 3 to 5 days after eating infected food before symptoms develop and the illness usually lasts from 7 to 10 days. The elderly, infants and those with impaired immune systems are more likely to have a more severe illness.

Where Does *Campylobacter* Come From?

Campylobacter can be found in the intestinal tracts of cattle, sheep, dogs, cats and poultry.

How do people catch *Campylobacter*?

You can become infected with *Campylobacter* through the ingestion of:

- Unpasteurised milk and cheese
- Undercooked meat and poultry
- Untreated water sources

or through contact with the vomit or diarrhoea of:

- infected persons or
- puppies and kittens.

It is generally spread by poor sanitation within the home, particularly via the kitchen. The high degree of contamination of poultry with *Campylobacter* requires that extra care be taken when preparing meals with poultry on the menu.

How can *Campylobacter* be diagnosed?

Many different kinds of illnesses can cause diarrhoea, fever or abdominal cramps. Determining that *Campylobacter* is the cause of the illness depends on laboratory tests. These tests are organised by your doctor or local Environmental Health Officer.

How can *Campylobacter* infections be treated?

Often it is better for the body to fight food poisoning itself unless symptoms are severe and continuous.

Usually the body will rid itself of the infection within a couple of weeks. It is important for you to drink plenty of water during this time.

that requires investigation by an Environmental Health Officer.

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Campylobacter bacteria can remain in the body after symptoms of food poisoning have disappeared. There is always the possibility that the infection could be passed to other people.

Food handlers and children who attend day care centres must remain home while they still show clinical symptoms and may return to work only if faecal specimens prove negative.

The Environmental Health Officer may ask the patient to provide a follow-up specimen until one proves to be *campylobacter* negative.

What can a person do to prevent *Campylobacter*?

The cross-contamination of foods should be avoided. Uncooked meats should be kept separate from produce, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods. Hands, cutting boards, counters, knives, and other utensils should be washed thoroughly after handling uncooked foods. Hands should be washed before handling any food and between handling different food items.

People who have *Campylobacter* should not prepare food or pour water for others until tests confirm that they no longer be carrying the *Campylobacter* bacteria. People should wash their hands after contact with animals or their faeces.

What can be done to prevent *Campylobacter*?

It is important for your local Environmental Health Officer at the Shire of Denmark to know about cases of *Campylobacter*. If many cases occur at the same time, it may mean that a restaurant, food or water supply has a problem

Better education of food industry workers in basic food safety and restaurant inspection procedures can also reduce the risk of cross-contamination and other food handling errors that can lead to infection.

