

Campylobacteriosis Fact Sheet

1. **What is Campylobacteriosis?** – Campylobacteriosis (Campy) is an infection that affects the intestinal tract and, rarely, the bloodstream. Most illness is caused by the bacterium *Campylobacter jejuni* or *Campylobacter coli*. Campy is one of the most common causes of diarrheal illness in the United States. Most cases are seen in the summer months.
2. **Who gets Campy?** – Campy occurs in all ages. As is the case with most bacterial foodborne infections, it is most common in young children.
3. **How is the disease spread?** - People can become infected with *Campylobacter* bacteria if they consume raw or undercooked poultry meat or from consuming food that has been cross contaminated during cooking by these items. Campy can occur as a single case or outbreak, when many people develop the condition at one time. Many outbreaks are associated with unpasteurized milk or contaminated water. Campy can spread through contact with infected people or animals.
4. **What are the symptoms of Campy?** - Campy may cause mild or severe diarrhea, often with fever, abdominal cramps and blood in the stool. People who become infected with *Campylobacter* usually recover within 2-5 days, but the illness can last for up to 10 days. Rarely, *Campylobacter* infection can lead to complications such as Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a serious neurological condition, or arthritis. It is estimated that approximately one in 1,000 reported *Campylobacter* illnesses lead to Guillain Barre Syndrome.
5. **How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?** - The symptoms generally appear two to five days after the exposure.
6. **Where are *Campylobacter* bacteria found?** - The most common cause of Campy is contaminated poultry meat. Many animals including swine, cattle, dogs and birds (particularly poultry) carry the bacteria in their intestines. The presence of the bacteria within these animals may in turn contaminate meat products (particularly poultry), water supplies, milk and other items in the food chain.
7. **How long can a person carry *Campylobacter* bacteria?** - Generally, infected people will continue to pass the bacteria in their feces for a few days to a week or more. Untreated people may pass the bacteria as long as 2 to 7 weeks. Certain antibiotics may shorten the carrier phase but are generally not indicated.
8. **Do infected people need to be isolated or excluded from school or work?** - Since the organism is passed in the feces, only people with active diarrhea and who are unable to control their bowel habits: e.g. infants, young children, certain handicapped individuals, should be isolated. Most infected people may return to work or school when their stools become formed provided that they carefully wash their hands after toilet visits. Food handlers, children in day care and health care workers should not work while symptomatic

with diarrhea, and must obtain the approval of the local or state health department before returning to their routine activities.

9. **What is the treatment for Campy?** - Most people infected with *Campylobacter* bacteria will recover on their own or at most will require fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics are occasionally used to treat severe cases or to shorten the carrier phase. Since relapses occasionally occur, some physicians might treat mild cases with antibiotics to prevent a recurrence of symptoms.

10. **How can Campy be prevented?**

- a. Always treat raw poultry, beef and pork as if they are contaminated and cook all products thoroughly,
- b. Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping on other foods,
- c. Refrigerate foods promptly; minimize holding foods at room temperature,
- d. Cutting boards and counters used for preparation should be washed immediately after use to prevent cross contamination with other foods,
- e. Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats,
- f. Avoid using raw milk,
- g. Ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature is reached--particularly when using a microwave, which may heat food unevenly,
- h. Avoid eating raw eggs or undercooking foods containing raw eggs,
- i. Encourage careful hand washing before and after food preparation.,
- j. Make sure children, particularly those that handle pets, wash their hands carefully, and
- k. Ensure people with diarrhea wash their hands carefully and frequently to prevent the spreading infection to others.

11. **For more information about Campylobacteriosis:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/campylobacter/>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician and/or veterinarian for specific clinical information related to you or your animal.