



CAMPYLOBACTER INFECTION (Campylobacteriosis)

What is *CAMPYLOBACTER*?

Campylobacter is a bacterium that infects the intestines and is one of the most common causes of diarrheal illnesses in the United States. It is an important cause of travelers' diarrhea often associated with international travel.

Who gets *Campylobacter*?

Anyone in any age group can get *Campylobacter*. Persons with a weakened immune system may have an increased risk of infection, more severe symptoms and may become chronic carriers.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can include diarrhea (sometimes bloody), stomach ache, fever, nausea and vomiting. The illness typically lasts one to two weeks. Only a special laboratory test can tell if someone is infected.

What is the treatment for *Campylobacter*?

Treatment is usually not indicated. Dehydration can occur and should be treated with fluids. The illness usually resolves by itself, but sometimes may require treatment with antibiotics for severe cases or to shorten the length of time the bacteria is passed in the stool (carrier phase). Physicians may treat mild cases to prevent symptoms from returning since relapses sometimes occur.

How is *Campylobacter* spread?

The bacteria are found in human and animal feces. It is very common in cattle and poultry. People can get *Campylobacter* by drinking raw or contaminated milk or contaminated water; eating contaminated poultry or meat; or coming in contact with infected pets and other animals. Most cases of campylobacteriosis are associated with eating raw or undercooked poultry meat or from cross-contamination of other foods by these items. It is very rare to get *Campylobacter* from another person who has it.

How soon do symptoms appear?

People usually get sick within two to five days of exposure to these bacteria. However, illness can occur in as little as one day to as long as 10 days.

How can *Campylobacter* infection be prevented?

Infection can be prevented by:

- properly cooking poultry and meats to at least 165°F;
- handwashing after using the toilet, before handling any food, after handling raw foods, and after contact with pet feces;
- only drinking pasteurized milk; and
- never drinking water from creeks, lakes or springs.