



## What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacter is a bacteria that causes an infection of the bowel. It is usually caught from eating contaminated or poorly handled food, especially chicken. Other sources of infection are household pets, farm animals, contaminated drinking water or another infected person.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually start 2 - 5 days after ingesting the bacteria, when people develop diarrhoea (often with severe abdominal pain), fever or chills and muscular pain. Nausea and vomiting can occur too. Symptoms usually last for a week but diarrhoea can sometimes persist for 10 days or longer. Campylobacter infection can mimic appendicitis.

## How are people infected?

People become infected when they swallow the bacteria which has been shed in an infected person's or animal's faeces. Common causes include:

- Handling or eating raw or undercooked chicken or meat
- Drinking [unpasteurised milk](#)
- Eating food prepared by infected people
- Drinking from a poor quality water supply e.g. roof or stream water
- Contact with pets, especially [puppies](#) and kittens with diarrhoea
- Contact with manure from farm animals
- Contact with infected people, including children and babies

## How is it treated?

Usually extra fluid and rest are advised. However, a doctor should always be consulted and may recommend antibiotic treatment in selected cases.

## How do I protect myself and others?

- Avoid contact with infants, very elderly or ill people while you have diarrhoea.

### [Look after food carefully:](#)

- Thaw frozen meat completely
- Cook meat and poultry thoroughly
- Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods in the refrigerator
- Store raw foods underneath cooked foods to prevent contamination



- Clean knives, cutting boards and other surfaces after contact with raw meat and poultry
- Don't handle food if you have diarrhoea - you could spread the illness

Remember:

- Wash your hands:
  - After going to the toilet or changing nappies
  - After playing or working with animals
  - Before handling food
  - After touching raw meat or chicken

### **Do I need to take time off work, school or preschool?**

- Stay away from work, school or preschool when you have diarrhoea.
- Staff and children of early childhood centres should not return until they have been free from all symptoms for 48 hours.
- People who work with food or in healthcare should not return until they have been free from all symptoms for 48 hours.

For more information about this illness contact a Health Protection Officer on 0800 221 555