



Campylobacter

Patient Information

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What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacter is a bacterial infection that causes gastroenteritis ('gastro') in humans.

How can Campylobacter be spread?

Campylobacter infection is mainly acquired by one of the following:

- Eating contaminated food, especially undercooked chicken
- Poor hygiene when handling and preparing raw chicken
- Drinking untreated water or unpasteurised (raw) milk
- Eating food (such as salad) that has been cross-contaminated with Campylobacter from raw meats/chicken
- Poor hygiene after handling young pets or having close contact with farm animals (e.g. petting zoo)
- Person to person spread due to poor hygiene

Symptoms of Campylobacter

Most people with Campylobacter will experience one or more of the following symptoms within 2 to 5 days of initial infection:

- Diarrhoea (this may contain blood or mucus)
- Stomach cramps
- Fever
- Nausea and vomiting

Symptoms associated with Campylobacter infections can typically last between 2 and 10 days.

Treatment of Campylobacter

- Talk to your doctor if you think you have Campylobacter infection. Your doctor may arrange a faecal sample for testing to confirm the infection
- Most people will recover from Campylobacter with rest and fluids
- If the results of the tests show that you have Campylobacter infection the doctor will provide advice and appropriate treatment

Can I still have visitors?

Yes – you can still have visitors.

What happens when I go home?

- Do not go to work or school for at least 24 hours after symptoms have finished or 48 hours if you are a food handler, child care worker, or health care worker
- Do not handle or prepare food for the family or household for at least 24 hours after symptoms have stopped
- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly after going to the toilet

Good hygiene practices

Hand Hygiene is the most effective way to prevent ALL infections, including the flu and the common cold. Encourage your family and friends to maintain good hand hygiene practices every day Hand Washing Alternative - Alcohol based hand rub / gel.

During your stay in hospital you may have seen the staff using an alcohol-based hand rub, as an alternative to soap and water. Alcohol-based hand rubs or gels can be used for hand hygiene as long as your hands are not visibly soiled / dirty.

Prevention

To minimise the risk of Campylobacter infection:

- Cook all poultry products thoroughly. Make sure the meat is cooked throughout (no longer pink) and any juices that run are clear
- Wash hands with soap and warm water and dry thoroughly before preparing food, and after handling raw meat and chicken
- Use separate cutting boards for raw meat and other foods to prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen
- Carefully clean all cutting boards, work surfaces and utensils with detergent and hot water after preparing raw meat or chicken
- Avoid drinking unpasteurised milk and untreated water
- Wash hands thoroughly after handling pets, especially young kittens and puppies

Where can I get further information

You can talk to your doctor or the nursing staff. If you wish to speak with the Infection Control Department ask your nurse to contact us.

References

1. Queensland Department of Health. April 2018. Campylobacter. <http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthCondition/condition/14/33/155/campylobacter>