

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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Campylobacter

What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacter is a diarrheal illness caused by a group of bacteria. It is one of the most common causes of diarrhea in the world. Campylobacter occurs more often in the summer months than in winter. People become ill from eating raw or undercooked poultry (chicken), eating foods contaminated with the bacteria, and drinking unpasteurized milk or contaminated water. The illness is not usually spread from person to person.

What are the symptoms of Campylobacter?

- Diarrhea
- Stomach ache
- Fever
- Nausea and/or vomiting

Illness usually lasts one week. Some infected people do not show any signs of illness (asymptomatic).

How is Campylobacter spread?

Campylobacter is spread by eating undercooked meat and poultry, drinking contaminated water and unpasteurized milk, or contact with stool of infected dogs and cats.

Is there a treatment for Campylobacter?

Many infections are mild and clear up by themselves. It is important to replace body fluids lost due to diarrhea. Antibiotics may be recommended for severe illness. If an antibiotic is given, all of the medicine should be finished as directed by the doctor.

See your doctor if you have symptoms. You may be asked to bring a sample of your bowel movement (stool).

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How can Campylobacter be prevented?

A very small number of Campylobacter bacteria (fewer than 500) can cause illness in people. Just one drop of juice from raw chicken meat can infect a person. One way to become infected is to cut poultry meat on a cutting board, and then use the unwashed cutting board or utensil to prepare vegetables or other raw or lightly cooked foods. Infants may get the infection by contact with poultry packages in shopping carts.

- Cook all poultry products thoroughly. Make sure that the meat is cooked throughout (no longer pink) and any juices run clear. All poultry should be cooked to reach a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F.
- If you are served undercooked poultry in a restaurant, send it back for further cooking.
- Wash your hands with soap before preparing food.
- Wash hands with soap after handling raw foods of animal origin and before touching anything else.
- Prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen by using separate cutting boards for foods of animal origin and other foods and by carefully cleaning all cutting boards, countertops, and utensils with soap and hot water after preparing raw food of animal origin.
- Only eat and drink **pasteurized** milk and dairy products.
- Do not drink untreated water from shallow wells, lakes, ponds, rivers and streams.
- Make sure that persons with diarrhea, especially children, wash their hands carefully and frequently with soap to reduce the risk of spreading the infection.
- Wash hands with soap after contact with pet feces.
- Use good hygiene and wash your hands and your children's hands.
- **If you are a food-service worker, a health care worker, or a day-care worker:**
Report your illness to your supervisor and do not work until your illness is over and your doctor says it's OK to return to work.

For more information on Campylobacter, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.

For additional copies, visit our website at www.oakgov.com/health.