

# ***Campylobacter***

## **Fact Sheet**



### **What is *Campylobacter*?**

*Campylobacter* are bacteria that cause diarrheal disease in humans. The bacteria are common in chickens but don't make chickens sick.

### **How is it spread?**

*Campylobacter* is spread to people when they eat food that has not been well cooked, drink water that has the bacteria in it, or drink unpasteurized milk. *Campylobacter* is found in the feces of infected people and animals. Sometimes it can spread from person to person if a person has the bacteria on their hands and they do not wash their hands well after using the toilet or changing diapers. People can also be infected by their pets.

### **What are the signs and symptoms?**

The most common symptom is diarrhea. The diarrhea may have blood in it. Other symptoms include stomach pains, tiredness, fever, nausea and vomiting.

### **How will I know if I have an infection?**

Your doctor's office will send a sample of your stool to the laboratory to be tested. It will take several days to do the test. Some people can have the disease and not have any symptoms.

### **How is it treated?**

Most people get over this infection without any treatment. A few can get very sick and may need antibiotics. People with *Campylobacter* should drink lots of fluids while they have diarrhea.

### **How can I prevent illness?**

- Always wash your hands with soap and water
  - Before eating, preparing food, and after preparing food, especially handling raw meat
  - After using the toilet, changing diapers
  - After touching pets or other animals (especially chickens)
- Cook all poultry (chicken and turkey) thoroughly including livers, other organs, and pâté. The meat should not be pink and the juices should be clear.

- Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw and cooked meat products and raw vegetables, fruit or cheese
- Use only clean utensils, dishes and cutting boards when cooking or preparing food
- Keep infants and children from touching raw poultry products and packaging
- Avoid eating raw shellfish
- Do not eat or drink unpasteurized dairy products, including raw milk
- Avoid drinking untreated water when hiking or camping
- Avoid swallowing water when swimming or boating
- If you are taking care of someone with *Campylobacter* infection, wash your hands with soap and water after cleaning the bathroom, helping with toileting, changing diapers or handling soiled clothing or bed linens.

### **What about work and daycare?**

- Children with diarrhea should not attend daycare or school until the diarrhea stops
- People with *Campylobacter* should not work in food related businesses as food handlers or cooks until at least 24 hours after their diarrhea stops
- People who work in health care should not do patient care until their diarrhea stops

### **Where can I get more information?**

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821 or visiting [www.maine.gov/idepi](http://www.maine.gov/idepi). The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - <http://www.cdc.gov> - is another excellent source of health information.