



Diseases Fact Sheet - Campylobacteriosis

South Dakota Department of Health

Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

What is it?

Campylobacteriosis is a bacterial infection that affects the intestinal tract and, rarely, the blood. Most cases are seen in the summer months and may occur as single cases or outbreaks.

Is this a new disease?

No. Campylobacteriosis has probably been in existence for many years but has only recently been recognized as a common infection due to improved laboratory methods.

Who gets campylobacteriosis?

Anyone can get *Campylobacter* infection.

How is the germ spread?

Campylobacter are generally spread by eating or drinking contaminated food or water, and occasionally, by contact with infected people or animals.

What are the symptoms of campylobacteriosis?

Campylobacteriosis may cause mild or severe diarrhea, often with fever and traces of blood in the stool. It can also cause abdominal pain, vomiting, fever, nausea and malaise.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The symptoms generally appear 2 to 5 days, occasionally up to 10 days, after eating or drinking the contaminated food or drink.

Where are the *Campylobacter* germs found?

Many animals including pigs, cattle, dogs, kittens, rodents, and birds (particularly poultry) carry the germ in their intestines. These sources in turn may contaminate meat products (particularly poultry), water supplies, milk and other food items.

For how long can a person carry the *Campylobacter* germ?

Generally infected people continue to pass the germ in their feces for a few days to a week, or as long as 7 weeks.

Do infected people need to be isolated or excluded from school or work?

Most infected people may return to work or school when the diarrhea stops, provided that they carefully wash their hands after toilet visits. However, since the germ is passed in the feces, people with diarrhea should not work in food handling, or care for people in hospitals, day care centers, or long-term care facilities. Individuals who are carrying the germ, but who are not sick should not work if they have poor hygiene and poor hand washing habits. Food handlers, staff in day care, and health care workers must obtain the approval of the state or local health department before returning to their routine activities. These persons should be excluded from duties until clinical recovery, as determined by a physician.

What is the treatment for campylobacteriosis?

Most people infected with *Campylobacter* will recover on their own without drugs or may require fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics may be used occasionally to treat severe cases or to shorten the carrier phase, which may be important for food handlers, staff in day care or health care workers.

How can campylobacteriosis be prevented?

- Always treat raw poultry, beef and pork as if they are contaminated and handle accordingly:
 - Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping on other foods.
 - Refrigerate foods promptly; minimize holding at room temperature.
 - Cutting boards and counters used for food preparation should be washed immediately after use to prevent cross contamination with other foods.
 - Avoid eating raw or under cooked meats.
 - Ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature is reached - particularly when using a microwave. Cook chicken to 180°F and hamburger to 160°F.
- Avoid eating raw eggs or under cooking foods containing raw eggs.
- Avoid drinking raw milk.
- Encourage careful hand washing before and after food preparation.
- Make sure children wash their hands, particularly those who handle pets

Related Sites:



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- If you or your child have a diarrheal illness remember, a stool sample is needed to determine what is causing the diarrhea and who might be at risk for spread of the disease from the ill individual.
- Kits for collecting the stool sample are available from the South Dakota Department of Health's local [Disease Intervention Offices](#) or from the [State Public Health Laboratory](#). (There is a charge for the testing.)
- If *salmonella*, *E. coli*, rotavirus, *Shigella* or campylobacteriosis is diagnosed, department disease intervention staff may contact you about potential exposures such as food, farm animals, or other ill individuals.
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [FoodSafe](#)