

Campylobacter

What is campylobacteriosis?

Campylobacteriosis is a diarrheal disease caused by infection with the bacteria *Campylobacter*. There are different types of *Campylobacter* bacteria. *Campylobacter jejuni* is the most common cause of diarrheal illness in the United States. During 2013, there were 483 cases of Campylobacteriosis in Oklahoma.

What are the symptoms of campylobacteriosis?

The symptoms include diarrhea, stomach pain, fatigue, and fever. Diarrhea may be severe or bloody and can be followed by nausea and vomiting. These symptoms can last from two to five days and usually last no longer than ten days.

How does someone get campylobacteriosis?

Infection with *Campylobacter* mainly occurs by eating raw or undercooked chicken or pork, or contaminated food or raw milk. Illness may also be caused by touching raw poultry or pork and then not washing the hands. Bacteria from raw poultry and other contaminated foods may be transferred to other food items in the kitchen by using cutting boards or utensils that have not been washed thoroughly after contact with a contaminated food item. This is called cross contamination. Cross-contamination of raw or uncooked foods such as fruits and vegetables occur and these items are eaten with the bacteria on them. Direct contact with infected animals, especially puppies and kittens with diarrhea, is another way *Campylobacter* may be spread.

How long can someone spread Campylobacter if they have it?

Campylobacter may be in a person's stool anywhere from a few days to several weeks after infection. However, person-to-person spread of *Campylobacter* is uncommon. Most infections come from eating food contaminated with the bacteria.

Should someone go to work, school, or send a child to day care with a Campylobacter infection?

Since the bacteria is passed in the stool, infected people should not go to work if they handle food, or care for people in a day care, hospital, nursing home, or institution until 24 hours after diarrhea has stopped. Children that attend day care should be kept at home while having diarrhea until 24 hours after the diarrhea has stopped.

Is there any treatment for campylobacteriosis?

Most people improve without medical treatment. Children or elderly persons with severe diarrhea, as well as persons with blood in their stools, or persons with diarrhea that lasts several days should see a doctor. Severe *Campylobacter* infections may be treated with an antibiotic. It is important to remember to drink plenty of fluids when ill with diarrhea to prevent dehydration.

What can be done to prevent campylobacteriosis?

1. Always refrigerate meat products.
2. Always cook meat completely.
3. Never eat raw or undercooked meat.
4. Do not drink milk or juice that isn't pasteurized.

5. ALWAYS wash hands carefully before and after preparing food. ALWAYS wash your hands with soap and water after handling raw meats.
6. ALWAYS wash your hands after using the toilet or handling pets.
7. Take pets with diarrhea to the veterinarian.
8. Clean and sanitize countertops, cutting boards, knives, and utensils after preparing foods. Never reuse a plate or utensil for other foods after they have come in contact with raw meat.
9. Do not keep dishrags or sponges too long before washing or throwing away in trash. They can trap bacteria and recontaminate items with bacteria.