



CAMPYLOBACTER

Campylobacter gastroenteritis is a type of food poisoning caused by the bacteria *Campylobacter jejuni* and *Campylobacter coli*.

Nearly half of all reported food poisonings in Australia are due to *Campylobacter* infection and the number of cases is on the increase. Approximately one third of all cases are in young children aged four years or younger, but all age groups can be affected.

Campylobacter bacteria can be found in or on:

- raw poultry
- raw meats
- unpasteurised milk
- untreated water
- puppies and kittens
- wild animals and birds

SYMPTOMS

Campylobacter infection usually develops between two and five days after eating contaminated food.

The symptoms vary from mild to very severe and include:

- diarrhoea (may contain mucus and blood)
- abdominal pain (may be similar to appendicitis)
- vomiting
- fever
- nausea

Symptoms usually stop suddenly after two to five days but, in some cases, may last longer. If you suffer from any of these symptoms consult your doctor immediately. You may be requested to provide a specimen to confirm if *Campylobacter* was the cause of the illness.

HANDLING FOOD

If you have *Campylobacter* and:

- are employed as a food handler
 - ✓ contact your employer. You must not return to work until you are symptom free.
 - ✓ advise your local government Environmental Health Officer so that the source of infection may be traced.

- prepare food for your family
 - ✓ if possible, have someone else prepare the food. Wash your hands thoroughly before handling food
 - ✓ advise the local government Environmental Health Officer so that the source of infection may be traced.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CAMPYLOBACTER

Campylobacter infection can be avoided by following these simple rules.

1. **ALWAYS** wash your hands before handling food.
2. **PREVENT** sources of Campylobacter from contaminating ready-to-eat food.
 - ✓ Keep raw meat and poultry away from ready-to-eat food.
 - ✓ Clean and sanitise utensils and cutting boards immediately after they have been used to prepare raw meats.
 - ✓ Store ready-to-eat foods above raw meats to prevent juices from raw meats dripping into prepared food.
 - ✓ Cover all foods.
3. **AVOID** drinking:
 - ✗ untreated water;
 - ✗ unpasteurised milk.
4. **COOK** food thoroughly. Make sure meat and poultry reach at least 75°C in the centre.
5. **DEFROST** food safely either:
 - ✓ in the refrigerator; or
 - ✓ in the microwave oven on 'defrost' setting. NEVER defrost food at room temperature.
6. **BEWARE** pets carry bacteria so:
 - ✓ keep pets out of the kitchen when preparing food;
 - ✓ take your pet to the vet if it is sick;
 - ✓ wash your hands after touching pets or other animals.
7. **PROTECT** babies and young children. They are at greatest risk from Campylobacter infection so:
 - ✓ try to keep their hands clean after they have touched pets, been to the toilet etc;
 - ✓ wash your hands after changing nappies or dirty linen.

COOK FOOD THOROUGHLY

WASH HANDS BEFORE HANDLING FOOD

SEPARATE READY-TO-EAT AND RAW FOODS

REMEMBER: STORING FOOD BELOW 5°C OR ABOVE 60°C WILL HELP TO PREVENT FOOD POISONING.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information contact your local government Environmental Health Officer
or

Food Safety, Environmental Health Service

PO Box 8172

PERTH BUSINESS CENTRE WA 6849

Telephone: (08) 9388 4999

Facsimile: (08) 9388 4955

<http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au>

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