



Campylobacter Enteritis

Fact Sheet

What is it?

Campylobacter enteritis is an infection usually caused by the bacteria *Campylobacter jejuni*. This disease is found world-wide. It occurs most often in the summer months with about 4,000 cases each year in Ontario.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The symptoms include diarrhea (which may be bloody), abdominal pain, malaise, fever, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms usually occur within 3 to 5 days after exposure. The illness may be over in 2 to 5 days but some serious cases last as long as 14 days. Some infected persons do not have any symptoms. In persons with weakened immune systems, the infection can spread to the bloodstream and become life threatening. A stool sample needs to be analyzed to diagnosis the disease.

How is it spread?

These bacteria may be found in the stool of domestic and wild animals, most often in poultry and cattle. Puppies, kittens, other pets, swine, sheep, rodents, and birds have been the cause of human infection. The illness occurs after people eat food, or drink water or unpasteurized milk that is contaminated. People have become ill after contact with infected pets, farm animals, and infected infants. Cutting poultry or other raw meat on a cutting board then using the unwashed board or utensil to prepare raw vegetables or other lightly cooked foods can spread the infection. Even one drop of juice from raw chicken or meat can cause illness. Person to person spread of illness is uncommon.

What can be done to prevent it?

- Hand washing is the best way to prevent infection. Wash your hands after using the toilet, diapering infants, handling pets or before preparing foods.
- Clean and sanitize countertops and utensils before and after preparing foods.
- Use separate cutting boards for raw meat and ready-to-eat food.
- Cook poultry and meat completely to the recommended internal temperature using a probe thermometer.
- Store and serve foods out of the "Danger Zone" (below 4°C/40°F or above 60°C/140°F).
- Make sure that dairy products, meats and poultry are properly refrigerated.
- Drink only pasteurized milk.
- Drink water from a known safe supply which has been tested for bacteria.
- Avoid preparing or handling food if you have diarrhea.
- If animals or pets have diarrhea, consult a veterinarian.

Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 x349.
Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Campylobacter, March 2010.
- Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors, Campylobacter, August 2004.
- Heymann, D.L. (2008). *Control of Communicable Disease Manual* (19th Ed). Washington, DC: American P.H. Assoc.
- Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health, Campylobacter, May 2010

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