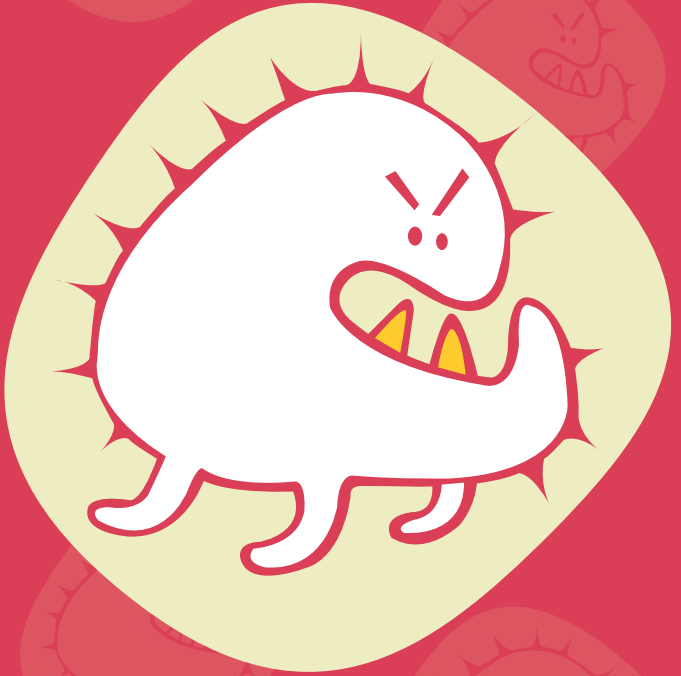


# campylobacter

Prevent this food and water-borne disease.



**Campylobacter** (pronounced cam-pile-oh-bacter) infection is caused by bacteria which are found in the gut of birds especially poultry, and animals such as cattle, sheep, cats and dogs.

It is passed on in the faeces (poo, tūtae) of infected birds, animals and humans.

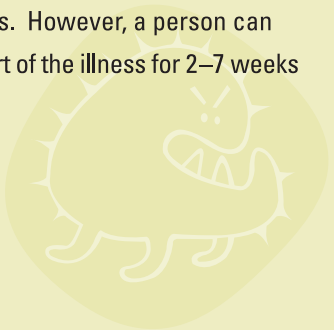
# How does a person become infected?

People become infected when they swallow the bacteria. This may be from contaminated water and food, or from contact with infected animals or humans.

## The signs and symptoms of the illness

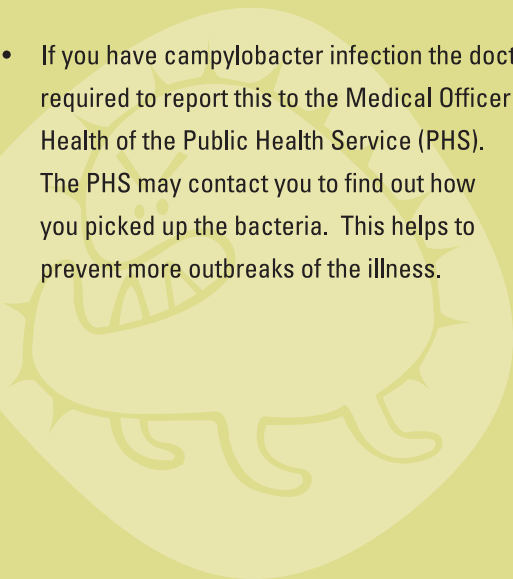
The illness:

- usually begins with diarrhoea which may be blood stained, and stomach pain and cramps which may be severe
- may begin with influenza-like symptoms ie, headache, muscle pains, fever, fatigue
- may develop one to ten days (usually two to five days) after contact with the bacteria
- may rarely have more severe symptoms such as arthritis or acute paralysis
- may last for about 10 days. However, a person can be infectious from the start of the illness for 2–7 weeks and relapses can occur.



# Treatment of campylobacter infection

- For advice, testing and treatment you will need to visit your doctor.
- The doctor may request a faecal specimen and give you a specimen jar, as a laboratory test may be needed.
- Campylobacter infection will usually get better without antibiotics. However, your doctor may give you a course of antibiotics if your illness is severe or you have other health problems.
- Drink plenty of fluids while the diarrhoea lasts to prevent dehydration. Go back to your doctor if your child is not drinking. (See note on drinking water.)
- If you have campylobacter infection the doctor is required to report this to the Medical Officer of Health of the Public Health Service (PHS). The PHS may contact you to find out how you picked up the bacteria. This helps to prevent more outbreaks of the illness.



## **Taking time off work or school**

Usually people can go back to work and children can return to early childhood centres and school if they have been free of symptoms for 48 hours.

However, as campylobacter infection is a notifiable disease you will need to check with your doctor or Public Health Service first.

If you are employed in a hospital, rest home, school, early childhood centre, or working with food you may be required to stay away from work until you have been free of symptoms for 48 hours.

## **How to avoid getting campylobacter and passing it on to others**

Wash your hands thoroughly by using plenty of soap, cleaning under fingernails, rinsing hands well and drying on a clean towel:

- before and after preparing food
- after going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy
- after caring for people with campylobacter
- after playing or working with animals.

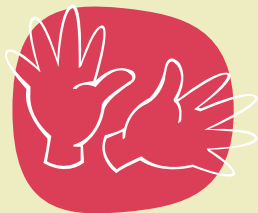
# Food

- Meat should be thawed in the fridge and not at room temperature.
- Keep raw meat covered and separate from other foods and store at the bottom of the fridge.
- Use separate chopping boards when preparing raw foods (especially meat and poultry) and cooked foods, or wash the board between preparing raw and cooked foods.
- To wash your chopping boards, scrub them clean in hot soapy water.
- Cook poultry thoroughly until the juices are clear.
- When barbecuing be sure to cook all meat thoroughly and avoid contaminating prepared foods with raw meat or juices.
- Make sure any milk you drink is pasteurised.
- Avoid eating shellfish which has been gathered from contaminated waters.

# Water in rural areas

- Drinking water taken from the roof, rivers or lakes should be boiled for one minute or use an approved filter that complies with the bacterial requirements of Standard AS/NZS4348:1995.
- When using roof water, spouting should be cleaned regularly and roofs kept clear of bird and animal droppings.
- Trim trees that are close to the house, to prevent animals from getting onto the roof and leaves filling the gutters.
- Note: if your water supply is chlorinated, campylobacter will be inactivated.

Further information on drinking water is available in the Ministry of Health's publications *Water Collection Tanks and Safe Household Water* (code HE10148) and the booklet *Household Water Supplies* (code HE4602).



**Washing hands in hot soapy water and drying them with a clean towel will help prevent the spread of campylobacter infection.**



This resource is available from [www.healthed.govt.nz](http://www.healthed.govt.nz)  
or the Authorised Provider at your local DHB.



New Zealand Government

