

Will I need treatment?

People with Campylobacter do not usually require antibiotics. Campylobacter infection can cause the body to lose a large amount of water through diarrhoea and vomiting, so you should drink plenty of fluids to replace the lost water and prevent dehydration.

When can I return to work? When can children return to school or child-care?

In order to reduce the risk of spreading infection, you should not return to work, and children should not return to school or childcare until symptom free for 48 hours.

**For further information
please log onto our website:**

<http://www.nhsggc.org.uk>

***If you are worried that you have contracted Campylobacteriosis you should contact your General Practitioner (GP), who may ask you to provide a stool sample to confirm the diagnosis. If you would simply like more information, contact either your GP or the Public Health Protection Unit at Greater Glasgow & Clyde NHS Board.
Tel: 0141-201-4917***

Public Health Protection Unit
West House
Gartnavel Royal Hospital
1055 Great Western Road
Glasgow G12 0XH

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Campylobacter

Patient information leaflet

Public Health Protection Unit 0141 201 4917

phpu@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacter is the most common cause of bacterial infection of the gut and a common cause of diarrhoea. Campylobacter infection may occur throughout the year, but is more common in late spring/early summer.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually develop 3-5 days after eating contaminated food or drink and usually stop within 4-7 days. These may include:

- ◆ **Stomach cramps**
- ◆ **Diarrhoea (sometimes bloody)**
- ◆ **Nausea**
- ◆ **Vomiting (less common)**
- ◆ **Headache and fever**

How does it spread?

Food is the most likely source of Campylobacter in humans. It is estimated that at least half of all raw chicken is contaminated with Campylobacter during mass production. Campylobacter live harmlessly in the gut of poultry, cattle, sheep, household pets and birds. During slaughter and processing of farm animals, the contamination from the gut can spread to other parts of the animal. This means that all raw meat and poultry should be treated as potentially infectious. In addition, unpasteurised milk is a potential source of Campylobacter. Campylobacter can withstand and grow in relatively low temperatures therefore untreated or inadequately treated water supplies, streams and ponds can also serve as a reservoir for the bacteria. Some birds can carry campylobacter. Do not drink milk if the bottle top has been pecked through.

The infection is most commonly acquired by eating contaminated food, drinks or having contact with the droppings of infected animals. The risk of person-to person spread is highest among children, especially if personal hygiene is poor. Adequate cooking should eradicate Campylobacter in food. However, the bacteria may spread in a kitchen from contaminated to non-contaminated food if hygiene practices are substandard.

Can I prevent infection?

Adhering to the following practices can reduce the risk of contracting or spreading Campylobacter:

1. Always wash your hands.

Regular, thorough hand washing with soap and warm water is essential and should be done:

Before:

- *Food handling and cooking*
- *Eating*
- *Feeding young children, the elderly or ill individuals*

and After:

- *Using the toilet*
- *Handling animals*
- *Changing nappies*
- *Handling raw meat or poultry*

2. Always ensure that food is thoroughly cooked.

3. Practice safe food preparation.

- *Never rinse raw meat before cooking – bacteria can spray onto nearby surfaces such as taps and clean dishes, which may then cause illness.*

- *Check 'use by' dates - use only food within the recommended period.*
- *Do not use the same chopping board, knives and utensils for raw food and other food stuffs.*
- *Clean food preparation areas with detergent and hot water.*
- *Prepare and store raw and cooked foods separately.*
- *Store raw meat and poultry in the fridge on the shelf below cooked foods to avoid drip contamination.*
- *Defrost poultry, meat and other products thoroughly before cooking. These items should be cooked until the juices run clear and there are no pink bits inside.*
- *Always follow manufacturer's instructions.*
- *Once cooked, consume food immediately or cool rapidly and refrigerate or freeze.*
- *Keep perishable products in the refrigerator operating below 5°C. Campylobacter can multiply on food at room temperature.*
- *If you re-heat food, make sure it is piping hot throughout.*
- *Wash salad items and other food to be eaten raw.*
- *Exclude pests and pets from the kitchen.*

4. Avoid consuming unpasteurised dairy products, particularly unpasteurised milk.

5. Do not drink untreated water from rivers, streams and unchecked private water supplies.

6. Avoid swimming pools until 2 weeks after the last episode of diarrhoea.