



# CAMPYLOBACTER

## **What is it?**

Campylobacter is an inflammation of the intestinal tract, which usually affects the lining (mucosa) of the small intestine. Many infections produce no symptoms.

## **Caused by:**

Campylobacter is a group of rod-shaped, spirally curved bacterium.

## **Symptoms:**

Most people have some or all of the following symptoms 2 to 5 days after exposure: diarrhea (may be bloody), abdominal pain or cramps, malaise (general feeling of being unwell), fever, nausea, vomiting, chills, headache and fatigue. The illness usually lasts about a week. This illness can also mimic appendicitis.

## **Incubation:**

The usual incubation period is 2 to 5 days following the ingestion of bacteria; however it can range from 1 to 10 days.

## **Treatment:**

Most intestinal infections get better by themselves. Usually the only treatment needed is to replace lost fluids and electrolytes. In severe cases antibiotics are prescribed.

## **Communicable:**

The bacteria are found in the feces of infected people during the illness. If not treated with antibiotics the bacteria may be excreted for 2 to 7 weeks. Good hand washing is needed at all times, to prevent the spread of the bacteria.

## **Transmitted by:**

The most common causes of campylobacter are drinking un-pasteurized (raw) milk, dairy products, fruit juices, and contaminated water; or eating undercooked meats and poultry. Animals can also be infected, and people can get the illness if they are in contact with the stool of a sick dog, cat, or bird.

## **Complications:**

Prolonged illness may occur in adults and sometimes relapses can occur. Serious complications such as: reactive arthritis, febrile convulsions, Guillain-Barré Syndrome and meningitis have occurred, although these complications are very rare.

## **Other:**

Infants/children, food handlers and health care workers should remain at home until they have been diarrhea free for 24 hours. When an individual is part of an outbreak, recommendations may vary.

## **Prevention:**

It is important to wash hands often with soap and warm water, especially after animal contact or using the toilet and before eating. Wash hands often when preparing food.

Clean and disinfect counter tops and utensils with a water/bleach solution immediately after preparing foods, particularly meats and poultry. Use separate cutting boards for raw and cooked meats to prevent cross contamination.

Cook foods derived from an animal source (particularly poultry) to an internal temperature of 74° C. Use proper storage and refrigeration by keeping foods out of the "Danger Zone". Cold food should be stored at a temperature of 4° C or less and hot food should be kept at a temperature no lower than 60° C.

Drink water from a safe water supply.

Drink only pasteurized milk and juices.

Avoid handling or preparing food if ill with diarrhea, especially if other people will eat the food.

## **Sources:**

1. Heymann D.L. (Ed.). (2004). *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual*, (18<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: American Public Health Association
2. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. *Campylobacter Infections*. Retrieved winter 2005, from [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/campylobacter\\_g.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/campylobacter_g.htm)

Revised winter 2005 – k.c

## **Windsor Office:**

1005 Ouellette Avenue  
Windsor, Ontario  
(519) 258-2146  
Fax: 258-6003

## **Leamington Office:**

215 Talbot Street East  
Leamington, Ontario  
(519) 326-5716  
Fax: 326-4642

## **Essex Office:**

360 Fairview Avenue West  
Suite 215, Essex, Ontario  
(519) 776-5933  
Fax: 776-6102

## **Website:**

[www.wechealthunit.org](http://www.wechealthunit.org)

