

CAMPYLOBACTER

What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacteriosis is a bacterial infection that affects the intestinal tract and rarely, the bloodstream. It is one of the more common causes of bacterial diarrhea in Montana.

Symptoms of Campylobacter

Not all of those infected with Campylobacter have symptoms. For those that do have them, the common symptoms are:

- Diarrhea (possibly bloody)
- Cramping
- Abdominal pain
- Fever
- Nausea / Vomiting

Symptoms will usually appear 2—5 days after exposure, but perhaps as soon as 1 day or as long as 10 days after exposure.

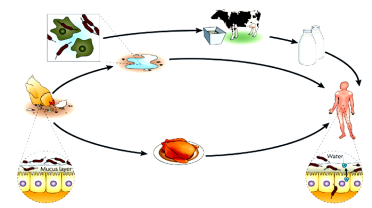
Diagnosis and Treatment

The infection is diagnosed when a culture of a stool specimen yields the organism. Almost everyone infected recovers without any specific treatment.

Patients should drink extra fluids as long as the diarrhea lasts. In more severe cases, antibiotics may be used and can shorten the duration of symptoms if given early in the illness.

How do people get Campylobacter?

Campylobacteriosis usually occurs in single, sporadic cases, but it can also occur in outbreaks. Most cases are associated with eating raw or undercooked poultry or from cross-contamination of other foods by these items. Infants may get the infection by contact with poultry packages, such as in shopping carts.



Outbreaks are usually associated with unpasteurized milk or contaminated water. Animals can also be infected, and people have acquired infection from contact with the stool of an ill dog or cat.

It is not usually spread from one person to another, but this can happen if the infected person is producing a large volume of diarrhea.

How can Campylobacter be Prevented?

Some simple food handling practices can help prevent Campylobacter infections:

- Cook all poultry products thoroughly.
- Wash hands with soap before preparing food.
- Wash hands with soap after handling raw foods of animal origin.
- Prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen.
- Avoid consuming unpasteurized milk and untreated surface water.
- Make sure that persons with diarrhea wash their hands frequently with soap to reduce the risk of spreading the infection.

For more information, contact a Public Health Nurse at the City-County Health Dept. at 454-6950 or visit www.cchdmt.org or www.cdc.gov