

# SELBY

IN THE VILE OF YORK

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## **Campylobacter**

### ***What is it?***

*Campylobacter* is a bacteria (germ) which can cause food poisoning. It is found in the intestinal tract of wild birds and various other animals including pets and poultry. It can also be found in untreated water or unpasteurised milk. It is the most common cause of diarrhoea in this country

### ***What are the symptoms?***

The symptoms caused by *Campylobacter* can be any of the following:

- Diarrhoea ( sometimes bloody )
- Stomach pains ( often severe )
- Feeling sick ( vomiting is rare )
- Flu like symptoms

### ***How can you catch it?***

The bacteria can be caught by:

- Eating or handling raw or undercooked meat and poultry
- Drinking unpasteurised milk
- Using milk from bird pecked milk bottles
- Drinking untreated water from springs and wells
- Cross contamination of cooked or ready to eat food. This can be from using cooked and uncooked meat on the same chopping board, using the same equipment, and not cleaning down work surfaces.
- Handling infected animals such as puppies and kittens.

### ***How long does it last?***

The incubation period, the time between consuming the infection and the symptoms starting is normally 2 to 5 days, but can range from 1 to 10 days.

The symptoms can last from 1 to 7 days.

### ***How is it treated?***

In most cases symptoms clear without any treatment, although in some instances antibiotics will be prescribed by a G.P.

Then intake of lots of fluids is recommended to prevent dehydration.

### ***Can I give it to somebody else?***

Person to person spread is rare although the following shows ways of spreading contamination:

- People with campylobacter infection have *Campylobacter* bacteria in their faeces. If these people do not wash their hands after going to the toilet, then contaminated hands can spread the bacteria to surfaces and objects which will be touched by other people. Contaminated hands can also spread the bacteria to food, which may be eaten by other people.
- Hands can also become contaminated with bacteria when a person changes a nappy of an infant with campylobacter infection.
- People and animals can carry *Campylobacter* in their faeces without having any symptoms. These people and animals can still pass the disease on to others.
- Contaminated drinking water can also spread *Campylobacter* bacteria.

### ***When can I go back to work/school/Nursery?***

Food handlers, childcare workers and health care workers with campylobacter infection must not work until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped. If anti-biotics are taken then the return must be 48 hours symptom free after completing the course of tablets. On return to work they must maintain good personal hygiene. Children should not return to school until symptoms have stopped.

### ***What can I do to prevent getting it again?***

To avoid infection via food the following precautions should be taken:

- Make sure all meats, poultry and eggs are well cooked.
- Avoid contaminating ready to eat foods with the juices from raw meat and poultry by sealing the foods in different containers.
- Always wash the chopping board and knife used in preparing raw meat and poultry, thoroughly, in hot water and detergent.
- Always wash hands thoroughly with hot water and soap, before preparing food and after handling raw meat.
- Do not drink unpasteurised milk or milk from where birds have pecked the foil tops from bottles.

Although direct person to person contact is uncommon, if someone in the household has campylobacter food poisoning, the following measures should be taken:

- Clean toilet seats, flush handles, door handles and wash basin taps with a fresh solution of hot water and disinfectant or bleach daily and whenever there is visible soiling.
- Wash soiled clothing or bedding on a hot wash cycle.
- Supervise young children with hand washing.
- Wash hands after going to the toilet and after changing nappies.
- Wash hands after contact with pets and animals