

# **Environmental Services**

# **Campylobacter**

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## **What is Campylobacter?**

Campylobacter is a bacteria. If you get infected with it you may get some or all of the following symptoms:

- Flu-like illness
- Headaches
- Feeling sick
- Vomiting
- Stomach ache
- Diarrhoea.

## **How long might I be ill?**

Symptoms usually start three to five days after becoming infected with Campylobacter, although sometimes they can start up to ten days after becoming infected. Symptoms can last for up to ten days, occasionally two weeks or more.

## **How did I get Campylobacter?**

There are several possible ways of catching Campylobacter which include:

- Eating or drinking contaminated food, milk or water.
- Eating or drinking unpasteurised (raw) milk, raw meat or poultry (cooking and pasteurising destroy the bug).
- Drinking milk whose bottle tops have been pecked by birds.
- Swallowing water from ponds, lakes and streams or unchlorinated swimming pool water.

- Drinking unchlorinated water.
- Contact with pets, especially puppies and kittens.
- Accidental transfer of germs from faeces to mouth.

### **How can I stop it from spreading?**

- Wash your hands thoroughly.
- Clean surfaces in the bathroom such as taps, toilet handles and door handles.
- Do not share towels.
- Supervise small children who are washing their hands.
- Wash soiled linen on a “hot cycle” in the washing machine. If there is a lot of faecal material, as much as possible should be disposed of down the toilet.

### **Should infected people stay away from work or school?**

Most people can return to work or school 48 hours after the diarrhoea has stopped. Food Handlers, health care workers and children in day care must obtain the approval of the Environmental Health Department before returning to their occupation.

### **Why has the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) contacted me?**

They want to find out how and where you might have caught *Campylobacter* and to advise you about how to avoid passing it on to other people.

The (EHO) Environmental Health Officer may ask for details of:

- The person who is ill.
- Other people living in the house.
- What symptoms you had.
- Whether you have been abroad recently.

They may also ask for faecal specimens from you and members of your household

## **How can I prevent Campylobacter in the future?**

### **Hands**

- Wash hands thoroughly before preparing food and after handling raw meat.
- Wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet.
- Wash hands thoroughly after changing a baby's nappy.
- Help small children wash their hands.

### **Fridges**

- Keep all perishable foods in the fridge – separate raw meat from other foods.
- Don't store raw and cooked food close together. Put raw food in containers if possible and put it near the bottom of the fridge so other food does not get contaminated.
- Defrost frozen food thoroughly before cooking it.
- Keep your fridge below 5°C.

- Take food out of the fridge just before using it.

## **Preparing food**

- Keep kitchen surfaces and utensils clean. Clean them after preparing different kinds of foods to avoid spreading germs.

## **Cooking**

- Cook all poultry and meat products thoroughly (so that the meat and juices are not pink).
- Do not reheat meat or poultry more than once.
- If you have to reheat food make sure it is piping hot.
- If you are having a barbecue, make sure you cook poultry and meat thoroughly, that you keep the food in the fridge until you are ready to cook it and that it is eaten as soon as it is cooked.

## **Buying food**

- Don't buy food that is past its 'sell by' date and don't eat it after its 'use by' date.
- Do not use unpasteurised milk or milk products. Do not drink milk from bottles whose tops have been pecked by birds.

## **Pets and other animals**

- Don't allow pets in the kitchen when preparing food.
- Ensure children and adults wash their hands after handling pets or other animals and before eating.

## **Water**

- If you go swimming in a lake or river, avoid swallowing water.
- Don't drink unchlorinated water.

## **Travel**

Take extra care if you are travelling to countries with poor sanitation and water supplies. Salads, unpeeled or unwashed fruit, tap water and drinks with ice in may all contain contaminated water. Do not eat meat that is not fully cooked.

## **Further information**

Further advice or copies of this information sheet may be obtained from:

Environmental Services  
Council Offices  
South Street  
Rochford  
Esse  
SS4 1BW  
Telephone: 01702 546366  
Facsimile: 01702 545737  
DX: 39751 Rochford

For information on food safety please visit our website  
<http://www.rochford.gov.uk> follow the links from Business to Food  
Safety or telephone 01701 318045.



**Rochford District Council**

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