

How should hands be washed?

- Always use warm, running water and a mild, preferably liquid, soap. (It is not essential to use soaps labeled as antiseptic or antibacterial.)
- Wet hands and apply a small amount of soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously for 20 seconds. Pay special attention to areas between fingers, finger tips and palms.
- Rinse hands under warm running water and dry thoroughly on a clean dry towel.

Environmental Health

You may also be contacted by an Environmental Health Officer. This is to see if there is a link between your illness and any other infections in the area. If you need to be visited, the officer will contact you in person.

Useful Information

NHS Inform www.nhsinform.scot

Food Standards Agency www.food.gov.uk

NHS 24 www.nhs24.scot
Freephone 111

Further information and help

For further information please contact your GP.

We are listening - how did we do?

We welcome your feedback, as it helps us evaluate the services we provide. If you would like to tell us about your experience:

- speak to a member of staff
- visit our website www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/feedback or share your story at: www.careopinion.org.uk or tel. 0800 122 31 35
- tel. 01851 704704 (ext 2236) Monday-Friday between 10am-4pm.

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Disclaimer

The content of this leaflet is intended to augment, not replace, information provided by your clinician. It is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Reading this information does not create or replace a doctor-patient relationship or consultation. If required, please contact your doctor or other health care provider to assist you to interpret any of this information, or in applying the information to your individual needs.

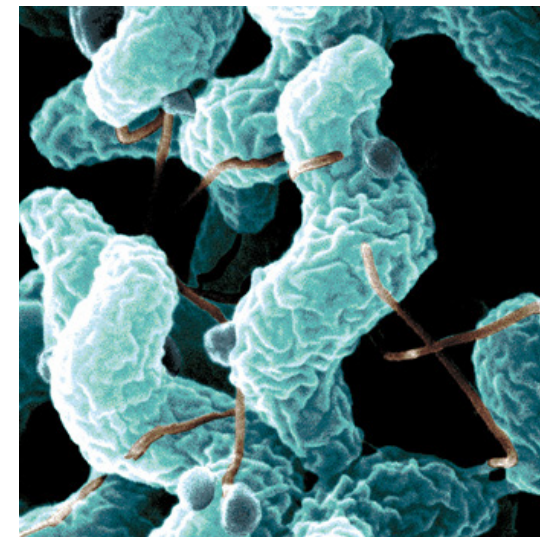
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Bòrd SSN nan Eilean Siar
NHS Western Isles

Health Protection Team

Campylobacter



Patient information leaflet

What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacter are germs (bacteria) that cause food poisoning.

The bacteria are found naturally in the bowel of many kinds of animals such as chickens and cattle. They cause problems in humans when they get into food, water or milk and are ingested. It is the most common cause of food poisoning in the U.K.

How did I get infected with Campylobacter?

Most cases of Campylobacter are associated with handling raw or undercooked meat (especially poultry).

Campylobacter can often be found on kitchen equipment used to prepare raw meat or poultry e.g. knives and chopping boards.

Other sources for infection come from unpasteurised milk, untreated water and not washing your hands thoroughly after touching infected animals both farm and domestic pets, especially young animals under six months of age also increase your risk of infection

Drinking contaminated water whilst travelling can cause campylobacter infection.

Person to person spread may occur if personal hygiene is poor.

It is impossible to tell from its appearance whether food is contaminated with Campylobacter. It will look, smell and taste normal, so correct handling and cooking is very important.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pains and cramps, fever, and generally feeling unwell.

They usually develop within 2-5 days, but can take as long as 10 days.

Most cases start to clear up after 2-3 days of diarrhoea and, 80% to 90% settle within 1 week.

How is Campylobacter treated?

Generally people with Campylobacter do not require treatment other than making sure that they drink enough fluid to prevent dehydration.

Most people with Campylobacter will recover within 2-5 days, although it can sometimes take up to 10 days to get better.

You should contact your GP if you:

- have an underlying health condition
- have a weakened immune system
- are pregnant
- have any other symptoms that you are concerned about.

Your GP may wish to do some blood tests to make sure no complications are developing.

Sometimes, if the infection is very severe, your GP may decide to prescribe an antibiotic. If prescribed, it is important that you complete the course as instructed on the bottle or packet.

How can I avoid a Campylobacter infection?

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water:

- before preparing and eating food
- after handling raw food
- after going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy
- after contact with pets and other animals
- after working in the garden.

You should also:

- keep cooked food away from raw food
- store raw foods below cooked or ready-to-eat foods in the fridge to prevent contamination
- cook food thoroughly, especially meat, so that it is piping hot, as this will destroy any Campylobacter
- keep all kitchen surfaces and equipment including knives, chopping boards and dish cloths clean
- do not drink untreated water from lakes, rivers or streams
- pay special attention to hygiene during farm/croft visits, washing hands after any contact with animals, and eating only in designated areas.

Do I need to stay off work or school?

Yes. While you are ill and have symptoms you are infectious. You can return to work or school once you have been free from diarrhoea for 48 hours.

You should also tell your employer you have had a Campylobacter infection if you work with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the young, those in poor health, or if you handle food.