



**What you need to know about**

# **Campylobacter**

## **What is it?**

*Campylobacter* is a bacterium found in the intestines of many types of animals and is the most common bacterial cause of diarrhoeal illness. *Campylobacter* infections are equally common in males and females, with babies and children in the 0–4 age group more likely to be affected. It has been found to be more prevalent during the summer months.

## **How can I be exposed to this infection?**

*Campylobacter* infection is mainly spread from animals and humans. In animals *Campylobacter* may be isolated from a wide range of healthy animals such as domestic cats and dogs, birds, cattle, pigs, poultry and goats. It may be easily spread from animal to animal through contact with infected faeces or through a common water supply

Individuals may become infected through consumption of the organism in undercooked chicken and pork, contaminated water, unpasteurised milk and through contact with infected domestic or farm animals. Although poultry are seen as a significant source of human infection, eggs are not usually contaminated with *Campylobacter*.

## **How do I know if I have a *Campylobacter* infection?**

After an incubation period of between 3–5 days, one or more of the following symptoms may appear; abdominal pain, diarrhoea (often bloody) with nausea and fever, however, there is usually no vomiting. In most cases the diarrhoea is self-limiting and may persist for up to 10 days. If you are pregnant, infection may not have any effect on the unborn child but the illness is unpleasant and best avoided.



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### **How can it be treated?**

In almost all cases you will recover without treatment over time. Fatalities are unusual. You should always exercise caution though and visit your doctor who may prescribe antibiotics or fluid and electrolyte replacement, depending upon the severity of the infection. In addition, drink plenty of water while the diarrhoea persists.

### **Find out more**

For more detailed information contact the **safefood** helpline.