



# Campylobacteriosis

Reportable to local or state health department.

**Consult the health department before posting or distributing the Parent/Guardian fact sheet.**

## School health and childcare provider information

### Cause

*Campylobacter* bacteria

### Symptoms

Diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea, fever, and vomiting. Diarrhea may contain blood and/or mucus. Illness usually lasts up to a week. Persons with *Campylobacter* infections may have mild symptoms or may not have any symptoms.

### Spread

*Campylobacter* bacteria leave the body through the stool of an infected person or animal. The bacteria enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool or raw meat or poultry are placed in the mouth. Spread can occur when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Spread can also occur through handling infected pets, usually puppies, kittens, or farm animals.

People most often get *Campylobacter* by eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water, unpasteurized milk, or unpasteurized juice.

### Incubation

It takes from 1 to 10 days, usually 2 to 5 days, from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin.

### Contagious period

As long as *Campylobacter* bacteria are present in the stool, a person can pass it to others. An infected person may be contagious for a few days after symptoms are gone but is most contagious while having diarrhea. Excretion of *Campylobacter* bacteria typically lasts 2 to 3 weeks without treatment.

### Exclusion

*Childcare*

Until 24 hours after diarrhea has stopped. Children who have *Campylobacter* in their stools, but who do not have symptoms, do not need to be excluded.

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### *School*

None, unless the child is not feeling well and/or has diarrhea and needs to use the bathroom frequently. Exclusion may be necessary during outbreaks.

Anyone with *Campylobacter* should not go in lakes, pools, splash pads, water parks, or hot tubs until after diarrhea has stopped.

Staff with *Campylobacter* may be restricted from working in food service. Call your local health department to see if these restrictions apply.

## Diagnosis

Recommend that parents/guardians call their health care provider if their child has symptoms. There is a lab test to detect *Campylobacter*.

## Treatment

Most people infected with *Campylobacter* recover without any specific treatment. An oral antibiotic may be prescribed if the disease is severe. Treatment with antibiotics shortens the duration of the illness and prevents relapse when given early in the infection.

## Prevention/Control

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.** Staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after they have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water immediately after handling pets or other animals.
- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).
- Avoid swallowing water when in lakes, pools, splash pads, water parks, or hot tubs.
- Food safety
  - Thoroughly cook all foods that come from animals, especially poultry. Make sure meat is cooked throughout (no longer pink) and any juices run clear.
  - Store all uncooked meat and poultry separately on a shelf lower than any other foods in the refrigerator.
  - Do not drink unpasteurized milk or unpasteurized juices.
  - Wash and disinfect all cutting boards, countertops, knives, utensils, and dishes that were used for raw meat or poultry before using with already cooked foods and with uncooked foods, such as fruits or vegetables.

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- Always wash hands, cutting boards, countertops, utensils, and dishes between uncooked and cooked foods.
- Do not let children serve or prepare food for others in the childcare or school setting.
- Minimize self-service food items in the school cafeteria and classroom (e.g., salad bars, trays of fruit, trays of dessert, etc.)

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.

Hennepin County Public Health  
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