



## Information about *Campylobacter* Infection

### Why Have You Been Given This Leaflet?

Your local council has a responsibility to investigate food poisoning and certain incidents of infectious disease. An officer from your local council's Environmental Health Department is contacting you to try and find out where your infection may have come from and to give advice on preventing further spread to others.

NHS Tayside Health Protection Team has notified your local Environmental Health Department that you or one of your household is suffering from a *Campylobacter* infection. They are often the first to tell you what type of infection you have rather than your General Practitioner (GP).

The aim of this leaflet is to give you information and to answer some of the most frequently asked questions about *Campylobacter* infection. **Please take time to read this leaflet.**

### What is *Campylobacter* infection?

*Campylobacter* infection is caused by bacteria (germs) and is a common cause of diarrhoea in the UK.

### Where does it come from?

The bacteria are found in the bowel of many animals, birds and pets. Their faeces can lead to the contamination of food and untreated water.

### How can you get *Campylobacter* infection?

You can become infected by

- Eating undercooked meat and poultry
- Eating cooked or ready to eat food that has been contaminated by raw meat, particularly poultry
- Eating or drinking unpasteurised dairy products
- Drinking or swimming in untreated water e.g. rivers, wells, springs or burns
- Touching animals particularly young animals such as lambs, calves, puppies or kittens and not washing hands afterwards.

### What are the usual symptoms?

The main symptoms are

- Severe stomach cramps
- Diarrhoea which might be bloody
- Fever
- Vomiting in some cases.

### When do the symptoms start?

The symptoms usually start 2 to 5 days after swallowing the bacteria but this period can be as short as 1 day or as long as 11 days.

### **How long will the symptoms last?**

The length and severity of the illness can be different for each person but the symptoms often last for a few days but may take up to 10 days to settle.

### **How do you treat a campylobacter infection?**

The infection will usually settle without any treatment.

It is important to drink fluids to replace the water lost through having diarrhoea and vomiting. This applies particularly for babies, children and the elderly.

If a young child has symptoms or if your symptoms continue or are particularly severe, consult your GP or seek medical advice from NHS 24.

### **Do I need to stay off nursery, school, work, or other activities?**

**Yes**, it is important to stay at home until you have had no vomiting or diarrhoea for 2 days.

### **What should I do if I have symptoms again?**

If your symptoms return or become more severe (e.g. blood in diarrhoea) you should see a GP or seek medical advice from NHS 24.

### **What should I do if I know of others with similar symptoms?**

If a young child develops symptoms or if an adult has symptoms which are severe or last for more than 2 days they should consult their GP or seek medical advice from NHS 24.

They should, if possible, submit a stool sample via their GP.

You should tell the officer of the Environmental Health Department the details of the others you know to be ill. This information can help in identifying sources of infection.

### **How can you prevent getting or passing to others a *Campylobacter* infection?**

#### **Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water**

- Before preparing, handling or eating foods
- After handling raw food especially meat or poultry
- As soon as possible after working, feeding, grooming or playing with pets and other animals
- You should pay special attention to hygiene during farm visits, washing hands after any contact with animals, and eating only in designated areas
- After going to the toilet or changing a child's nappy
- By ensuring young children wash their hands.

## Handle food and drink safely

- Thoroughly cook meat and poultry so that they are cooked all the way through, and no blood runs from them
- Thaw frozen food properly before cooking
- Always reheat food thoroughly
- Do not use the same knives, chopping boards and equipment for preparing raw foods and cooked or ready to eat foods
- Thoroughly clean knives, chopping boards and equipment used for preparing raw foods with hot water and detergent after each use
- Never put cooked food back on an unwashed plate previously used for uncooked meat
- Do not wash raw poultry because this will splash germs around
- Store cooked or ready to eat food in the fridge separately from raw meats. Raw foods should not be stored above or beside cooked or ready to eat food.
- Store uncooked meat on the bottom of the fridge to avoid dripping raw meat juices onto other food
- Wash all fruit, salads and vegetables that are to be eaten raw
- Do not drink untreated water or unpasteurised milk
- Do not use ice or drinking water in countries where the water supply might be unsafe
- Do not buy ready to eat foods from shops where you believe food hygiene standards are poor. Report such places to your local Environmental Health Department
- **Do not** prepare food for others until your diarrhoea and vomiting symptoms have been stopped for 48 hours.

## Household Measures

Whilst you have symptoms you need to be scrupulously clean around your home.

- Make sure all members of your household wash their hands thoroughly with soap and hot water after going to the toilet and after handling soiled clothing or bedding
- Make sure that everyone has their own towel and that they do not use anybody else's
- Wash all soiled clothes, bedding and towels in the washing machine on the hottest cycle that the manufacturer would recommend
- Clean toilet seats, toilet bowls, flush handles, taps and wash hand basins after use with detergent and hot water, followed by a household disinfectant.

## Water Safety

- Do not use swimming pools (including hot tubs and paddling pools, etc.) if you have diarrhoea. You should wait until you have had no symptoms for 2 days
- Do not swim in water that may be contaminated
- Do not drink untreated water and avoid swallowing water when in lakes and swimming pools
- If your water supply is from a private water source please discuss this with the Environmental Health Department.

### Where can you get further advice?

If you would like any further advice about *Campylobacter* infection or food hygiene please contact your local Environmental Health Department. The local offices are listed below.

#### Angus Council

Communities Department  
Dewar House  
12 Hill Terrace  
Arbroath  
DD11 1AH  
Website: [www.angus.gov.uk](http://www.angus.gov.uk)  
Email: [envhealth@angus.gov.uk](mailto:envhealth@angus.gov.uk)



Tele: 01241 435600

#### Dundee City Council

Environmental Protection Division  
Environment Department  
3 City Square  
Dundee  
DD1 3BA  
Website: [www.dundee.gov.uk](http://www.dundee.gov.uk)  
Email: [food.safety@dundee.gov.uk](mailto:food.safety@dundee.gov.uk)



Tele: 01382 433710

#### Perth & Kinross Council

Environmental and Consumer Services  
Pullar House  
35 Kinnoull Street  
Perth  
PH1 5GD  
Website: [www.pkc.gov.uk](http://www.pkc.gov.uk)  
Email: [enquiries@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@pkc.gov.uk)



Tele: 01738 476476

#### Other useful sources of information: -

The National Hand Washing Campaign [www.washyourhandsofthem.com](http://www.washyourhandsofthem.com)

The Food Standards Agency [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

Travel and Immunisation Advice [www.fitfortravel.com](http://www.fitfortravel.com)

NHS 24 Tele: 111 - [www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com)

#### NHS Tayside

Health Protection Team  
Directorate of Public Health  
Kings Cross  
Cleington Road  
Dundee  
DD3 8EA  
Website: [www.taysidepublichealth.com](http://www.taysidepublichealth.com)



Tele: 01382 596976 or 596987

Further copies of this information are available or can be downloaded from the above NHS and local council. This information can be made available in Urdu, Chinese, Hindi, Arabic, large print, Braille or audio tape. Information in other languages and formats can be made available on request. Contact NHS Tayside Communications Department on 01382 424138.