

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN  
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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## Campylobacter

### What is Campylobacter?

It is a germ that causes an infection when it gets into the intestine. It is one of the most common causes of diarrhea in the world.

### What are the symptoms of Campylobacter?

- diarrhea
- abdominal pain
- nausea
- vomiting

Illness usually lasts two to five days, sometimes longer in adults. Some people may have the germ with no signs of illness at all (that is an asymptomatic infection).

### How long is a person contagious?

Two to three weeks, but usually one to two days with treatment.

### How is it spread?

Campylobacter is spread by eating undercooked meat and poultry, drinking contaminated water and unpasteurized milk, or contact with stool of infected persons, dogs, cats, and other animals.

### Is there a treatment?

Many infections are mild and clear up by themselves. It is important to replace body fluids lost due to diarrhea. Antibiotics may be recommended for severe illness. If an antibiotic is given, all of the medicine should be finished as directed by the doctor.

See your doctor if you have symptoms. You may be asked to bring a sample of your bowel movement (stool).

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## How can I prevent it?

- 1) Thoroughly cook all foods that come from animals such as meats, eggs and especially poultry.
- 2) Do not re-use utensils that were used on raw meat or poultry until they are washed in hot soapy water.
- 3) Use **pasteurized** milk and dairy products.
- 4) Don't drink water from unsafe or unknown sources.
- 5) Take care of pets and provide them with proper veterinary care.
- 6) Use good hygiene and wash your hands.
- 7) **If you are a food-service worker, a health care worker, or a day-care worker:**  
Report your illness to your supervisor and do not work until your illness is over and your doctor says it's OK to return to work.

**For more information on Campylobacter, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

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