

Clinical information - Campylobacter

Incubation period/onset time

1 to 11 days (usually 2 to 5 days).

Common clinical features

Abdominal pain, profuse diarrhoea, flu like symptoms within 24 hours, malaise; vomiting is uncommon.

Reservoir

Gastrointestinal tract of birds (particularly poultry) and animals, cattle and domestic pets.

Transmission

Raw or undercooked meat (especially poultry), unpasteurised milk, bird-pecked milk on doorsteps, untreated water, and domestic pets with diarrhoea. Person to person if personal hygiene is poor.

Duration

2 days to 1 week

Other relevant features

The infective dose is relatively low but campylobacter does not multiply in food; foodborne outbreaks are rare. Large outbreaks from raw and inadequately pasteurised milk and contaminated water supplies. Occupational exposure when processing poultry in abattoirs may be implicated in some cases.

Control whilst you or a member of your family has symptoms

Take extra care with your hygiene and in particular wash hands thoroughly;

- after using the toilet
- before and after handling food especially foods which are not going to be cooked again, eg cooked ham
- after handling raw meat and raw vegetables, ie raw chicken
- before eating, feeding others and preparing foods for others
- after changing dirty nappies and soiled clothing
- after touching pets and other animals

Whilst symptoms persist it is important to maintain high standards of hygiene.

Exclusion

Until 48 hours after normal stool and symptom free

Last reviewed: 18 December 2008

