

Campylobacter

What you can do to reduce the risk of becoming ill due to Campylobacter

What is campylobacter?

Campylobacter is the main cause of bacterial food poisoning in the UK. Most people who get food poisoning from Campylobacter recover fully within about a week. However, Campylobacter infection (campylobacteriosis) can lead to serious health conditions and, although rare, can be fatal. Although there are more cases in the warmer months, people can get it at any time of the year.

People who are most likely to suffer severe symptoms are young children, pregnant women, people with an underlying health condition (e.g. cancer, diabetes, liver and kidney disease) and older people.

You can find information on the symptoms of campylobacter and how it makes you ill on the [NHS food poisoning page](#) or on the [UKHSA campylobacter page](#).

Video: FSA explains Campylobacter

How Campylobacter is spread

Campylobacter is widespread in the environment and can be found living in the intestines of most warm-blooded animals. Campylobacter is usually transmitted to humans from animal food products, such as undercooked poultry and red meat, and unpasteurised milk. However, some cases can be caused by contact with animal faeces or contaminated water.

One of the ways people become ill with Campylobacter is through cross-contamination from raw chicken. For example, washing raw chicken can spread campylobacter by splashing it onto hands, work surfaces, clothing and cooking equipment. Campylobacter has a low infective dose, which means that a low number of bacterial cells can cause illness.

How you can reduce the risk from Campylobacter at home

Cooking chicken and poultry thoroughly is very important as this is a main source of infections. Follow the label instructions on time and temperature required and check that:

- the meat is steaming hot all the way through
- none of the meat is pink when you cut into the thickest part
- any juices run clear

To reduce the risk of Campylobacter, it's important to:?

- [?cook food correctly?](#)by following the guidance on time and temperature as this will kill the bacteria
- never wash chicken/poultry or let raw chicken/poultry come into contact with other foods, kitchen utensils or surfaces
- [avoid cross-contamination](#) which might lead to bacteria passing from raw foods to foods that are ready to eat via things like reusable shopping bags, knives, dirty surfaces and chopping boards
- [chill your food?](#)below 5°C - this will stop or significantly slow the growth of bacteria
- keep any raw meat in secure, leak-proof containers at the bottom of the fridge
- make sure that food preparation areas are [clean](#) to prevent harmful bacteria from spreading.
- [wash your hands](#) regularly with soap and water before, during and after meal preparation?

FSA Explains

Foodborne bacteria

Foodborne bacteria live in the gut of many farm animals. During rearing, slaughter and processing it can be transferred into:

- meat
- eggs
- poultry
- milk

Other foods like green vegetables, fruit and shellfish can become contaminated through contact with animal and human faeces. For example, from manure used to improve soil fertility or sewage in water.

Foodborne bacteria can be spread by cross-contamination. For example, if raw and cooked foods are stored together, bacteria will spread from the raw food to the cooked food.

This is why it is important to follow the '4Cs' which are:

- [cleaning](#)
- [chilling](#)
- [cooking](#)
- [avoiding cross-contamination](#)

Some foodborne bacteria can also be spread from pets to people and from person to person through poor hygiene. This includes things like failing to wash your hands properly after going to the toilet or after handling pets.