

**This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.**

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

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**Worcestershire  
Health and Care**  
NHS Trust



## **CAMPYLOBACTER**

**What is it?**

**Your questions  
answered**

**An Information Leaflet for  
Patients and Staff**

## WHAT IS IT

Campylobacter is a small bacteria (germ), which at present is the most common form of food poisoning in Britain. It is more common in summer, with children and young adults having the highest incidence.

## WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Campylobacter is present most frequently in cattle and poultry. Puppies, kittens and birds are also sources of infection.

## HOW DO I GET IT?

Humans can catch the infection by:

- drinking water or untreated milk that has the germ in it
- eating contaminated food, such as chicken that has not been cooked properly
- having contact with farm animals or pets such as puppies with diarrhoea.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Most people who have campylobacter have stomach ache, diarrhoea, vomiting and fever.

## WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

The incubation period (the time taken from swallowing the germ until the illness starts) is usually between 3 to 5 days, although this can vary from between 1 and 11 days. The illness lasts only a few days and most people recover without having any treatment. Occasionally, a small number of people have a more unpleasant illness lasting weeks.

## IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

For most people there is no treatment except to drink plenty of water and rest until you feel better. In severe illness, antibiotics may be given. A person cannot be immunised against Campylobacter as no vaccine is available.

## CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

Campylobacter can be prevented if you wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water:

- after touching pets or farm animals
- before and after handling raw meat or poultry
- after using the toilet
- after changing a baby's nappy.

## HOW SOON CAN I RETURN TO WORK OR THE CARE SETTING?

Spread of Campylobacter is uncommon from person to person. Anyone who has the infection should stay off work until after the symptoms have stopped. Food handlers may return to work after a bowel habit has returned to normal for 48 hours and good hygiene is observed. Further testing of stools is unnecessary. The Council's Environmental Health Office may contact you to discuss your illness and offer further hygiene advice.

