

Campylobacter Infection Fact Sheet

What is *Campylobacter* infection?

Campylobacter infections are caused by *Campylobacter* bacteria. *Campylobacter* is one of the most common causes of diarrheal illness in the United States. CDC estimates the disease affects more than 1.3 million people every year.

How do people get infected with *Campylobacter*?

Common sources of *Campylobacter* are:

- raw or undercooked poultry, or food that touched raw or undercooked poultry or its juices
- raw (unpasteurized) milk
- contaminated water
- animals and animal poop (stool)

What are the symptoms of *Campylobacter* infection?

People with a *Campylobacter* infection usually have diarrhea (often bloody), fever, and abdominal cramps. They also may have nausea and vomiting.

These symptoms usually start 2 to 5 days after contact with the bacteria and last about 1 week. Some infected people do not have any symptoms.

People with weakened immune systems from medical conditions such as cancer or HIV/AIDS, or from treatments such as chemotherapy, may have more severe illness. *Campylobacter* occasionally spreads to their bloodstream and causes a life-threatening infection.

How is *Campylobacter* infection diagnosed and treated?

Campylobacter infection is diagnosed when a laboratory test detects *Campylobacter* bacteria in poop, body tissue, or fluids.

Most people recover without specific treatment. Ill people should drink extra fluids while they have diarrhea. Antibiotics are needed only for people who are very ill or at high risk for severe disease, such as those with weakened immune systems.

Is *Campylobacter* infection serious?

Most people who get *Campylobacter* infection recover completely within a week, although their poop may contain *Campylobacter* bacteria for several weeks.

Campylobacter infection sometimes results in long-term health problems. Some studies have estimated that 5–20% of people develop irritable bowel syndrome for a limited time and 1–5% develop arthritis.

About 1 in every 1,000 reported *Campylobacter* illnesses leads to Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS). GBS begins within a few weeks after the diarrheal illness. It occurs when the infection triggers an immune system reaction that damages nerve tissue and causes paralysis. The paralysis usually lasts several weeks and often requires intensive medical care.

Tips to Help Keep You and Your Puppy or Dog Healthy

Puppies and dogs sometimes carry germs that can make people sick.

Follow these steps when choosing a puppy or dog

- Pick a puppy or dog that is bright, alert, and playful. Puppies and dogs should have shiny, soft fur that is free of poop (stool).
- Make sure to take your new puppy or dog to the veterinarian for a health check-up within a week after adoption.

Follow these steps if your puppy or dog shows signs of illness

- Contact your veterinarian if you notice any signs of illness in your puppy or dog. Signs of illness include appearing sluggish or depressed, having diarrhea, abnormal breathing, and fluid running from the eyes or nose. Keep in mind that even a dog that appears healthy might spread germs to humans and other animals.
- If your puppy or dog becomes sick or dies soon after purchase or adoption, take it to the veterinarian promptly, and inform the pet store, breeder, or rescue organization about your dog's illness or death.
- Thoroughly clean the area occupied by your pet, and consider waiting at least a few weeks before purchasing or adopting another pet to reduce the chance of spreading disease to your new pet.

Follow these steps to prevent illness from puppies and dogs

- [Wash your hands](#) thoroughly with running water and soap for at least 20 seconds every time you touch dogs, their poop, or their food. Adults should supervise handwashing for young children.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer until you are able to wash your hands with soap and water.
- Pick up and dispose of dog poop, especially in areas where children might play. Use disposable gloves and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.
- Clean up any urine (pee), poop, or vomit in the house immediately, and disinfect the area. Use disposable gloves to handle anything that has touched pee, poop, or vomit, and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.
- Take your dog to the veterinarian regularly to keep it healthy and to help prevent the spread of disease.
- Don't let pets lick around your mouth and face.
- Don't let pets lick any of your open wounds or areas with broken skin.

Illness Prevention Tips for Pet Store Workers

Pets sometimes carry germs that can make people sick. These tips can help you stay safe when you're working or playing with pets and other animals.

Wash your hands.

Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds during these times

- Before and after eating
- After touching pets and other animals
- After touching pet food and treats or their food and water containers
- After cleaning up urine (pee), stool (poop), or vomit
- After using the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching raw foods of animal origin, e.g., meat and poultry

Dry hands using a clean paper towel or air dry them. Do not dry hands on clothing.

Eat and store your food safely.

- Always eat and drink in break areas away from places where animals roam or are caged and exercised.
- Keep food for people away from areas where pet food and treats are stored, and where animals roam or are caged and exercised.

Play it safe with pets and their food.

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water right after handling any pet food, including live or frozen rodents, raw meat, wet or dry food, and after touching feed and water containers.
- Don't let pets lick around your mouth and face.
- Don't let pets lick any of your open wounds or areas with broken skin.

Clean up messes safely.

- Clean up any pee, poop, or vomit in the store immediately, and disinfect the area well.
- Use disposable gloves for clean-ups and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.
- Wash work shoes or boots, gloves, clothes, and equipment regularly.

Follow store protocols for identifying and reporting sick or injured animals.