Campylobacter: how it affects you

Campylobacter is the most common cause of food poisoning in Australia. You can’t see it, smell it or even taste it on food, but if it affects you, you won’t forget it.

What is Campylobacter?
Campylobacter is a little known foodborne bacteria similar to Salmonella and E. Coli which causes gastroenteritis (food poisoning).

In some cases Campylobacter can also lead to irritable bowel syndrome, reactive arthritis and in rare cases Guillain-Barré syndrome—a type of paralysis.

How do you get it?
Campylobacter is spread by eating or drinking contaminated food, water or unpasteurised milk.

The most common way to get and spread Campylobacter poisoning is by touching raw chicken.

Last year, more than 3,200 people were so ill because of Campylobacter they ended up needing to receive hospital treatment.

How to prevent it
One of the main ways to get and spread Campylobacter is through cross-contamination.

The easiest way to protect yourself and your family is to follow our simple food safety tips every time you prepare raw food.

Follow these four rules to prevent Campylobacter causing food poisoning.

Symptoms of Campylobacter infection
Campylobacter infections typically cause abdominal pain and diarrhoea for between two and five days.
Cover and chill raw chicken

Cover raw chicken and store it at the bottom of the fridge so juices cannot drip on to other foods and contaminate them with food poisoning bacteria such as Campylobacter. Chilling food properly helps to stop harmful bacteria from growing.

Don’t wash raw chicken

Don’t wash chicken before cooking as this will spread Campylobacter around your kitchen by the splashing water. Washing chicken will not remove or kill Campylobacter bacteria.

Cook chicken thoroughly

Make sure to cook chicken thoroughly so that there is no pink meat and the juices run clear. Proper cooking will kill Campylobacter bacteria.

Wash used utensils

Thoroughly wash and clean all utensils, chopping boards and surfaces used to prepare raw chicken. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling raw chicken. This helps stop the spread of Campylobacter by avoiding cross contamination.

What is cross contamination?

Cross contamination occurs when harmful bacteria such as Campylobacter are spread between food, packaging, hands, surfaces and utensils.

Prevent cross contamination by washing utensils, chopping boards, trays and plates after you have used them for raw chicken.

Raw foods should always be handled and stored separately from cooked or ready-to-eat foods.

Queensland Health—Health Condition Directory: conditions.health.qld.gov.au

For health advice:

• contact your local doctor or nearest public health clinic
• call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

www.health.qld.gov.au