

Campylobacter:

what you need to know

Campylobacter is one of the most common causes of foodborne illness 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.

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?

Most cases of Campylobacter infection are associated with eating raw or undercooked poultry or by cross contamination.

It is important to keep raw poultry and their juices away from any already cooked or ready-to-eat foods and fresh produce.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can be affected by Campylobacter but certain people are at a greater risk for severe illness including young children (under 5 years), older adults (over 60 years) and people with weakened immunity.

How to prevent it

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

Follow these four safety tips to prevent foodborne illness from Campylobacter

Age groups most at risk

60+ Under 5s



230,000*
cases a year



3200**

hospitalisations as
a result of foodborne
illness caused by
Campylobacter



\$1.25 billion

annual total cost to society
for foodborne illness in
Australia



Symptoms of Campylobacter

Campylobacter infections cause gastroenteritis (commonly known as gastro) diarrhoea, abdominal pains, cramping and fever. Symptoms usually start two to five days after infection, and can last for one to three weeks.

QH435 01/16



* Estimated reported cases in Australia

** Estimated hospitalisation in Australia

1

Wash your hands and utensils

Thoroughly wash your hands with warm soapy water before and after handling raw poultry.

Thoroughly wash all utensils, containers, cutting boards and kitchen surfaces with hot soapy water after each use.

Use separate cloths for drying hands and dishes. Wash your sponge thoroughly after each use and replace it regularly.



2

Cover and chill raw poultry

It is important to keep raw poultry and their juices away from cooked or ready-to-eat foods and fresh produce.

Raw poultry should be stored in original packaging, or placed in a sealed container at the bottom of the fridge to prevent juices dripping onto other food.

Raw poultry should be stored in a refrigerator at a temperature of 5°C or below.



4

Cook raw poultry thoroughly

Thoroughly cook poultry to make sure harmful bacteria are killed.

Use a fork or skewer to pierce the thickest part of the meat and check that the juices run clear. There should be no pink meat.

Alternatively, use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the thickest part of the meat reaches at least 75°C.



3

Don't wash raw poultry

Washing raw chicken will not remove or kill Campylobacter but it will spread the bacteria around the kitchen. The spray from washing chicken can spread up to 80cm from the sink, contaminating nearby surfaces, utensils or food.



i

Information

What is cross contamination?

Cross contamination is the transfer of harmful bacteria such as Campylobacter to food from other food products, hands, surfaces or utensils that are contaminated.

It is especially important to keep raw poultry and their juices away from any already cooked or ready-to-eat foods and fresh produce.

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

