

# **West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Information for the Public on Campylobacteriosis**

## **What is Campylobacteriosis?**

*Campylobacter* is a bacteria that is carried by many animals in their intestines. It is a common cause of diarrhea. Many cases of campylobacteriosis are associated with handling raw or undercooked poultry.

## **What are the symptoms of *Campylobacter* infection?**

Campylobacteriosis may cause mild or severe diarrhea, often with fever and traces of blood in the stool. Symptoms generally appear 2-5 days following exposure, and illness generally lasts for no longer than 10 days. Prolonged or serious illness, can also occur. Infected people may continue to pass the bacteria in their stool for a few days or weeks after illness resolves.

## **How is Campylobacteriosis spread?**

*Campylobacter* is generally spread by eating or drinking contaminated food or water and, occasionally, by contact with infected people or animals. Many animals, including swine, cattle, dogs, cats, and birds, particularly poultry, carry the germ in their intestines. These sources in turn may contaminate meat products, untreated water, unpasteurized milk, and other items in the food chain. Caring for animals with *Campylobacter* in their feces can lead to infection in humans, if proper and careful handwashing practices do not occur.

## **How is Campylobacteriosis treated?**

Most people infected with *Campylobacter* recover on their own or require fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics maybe used if diarrhea is severe or does not resolve or improve by the time the culture result is available.

Those persons who are infected should be excluded from school or work while they have active diarrhea, especially if they are unable to control their bowel habits. Most infected people may return to school or work when their stools become formed, provided that they carefully wash their hands after toilet visits.

## **How can Campylobacteriosis be prevented?**

Share these prevention messages:

- Wash hands well after using the toilet, cleaning the toilet, after changing diapers, and after handling soiled towels or linens.
- Wash hands well before, during, and after fixing food.
- Thoroughly cook all poultry products, making sure the meat is cooked throughout, and any juices run clear.
- After preparing raw meat, thoroughly wash and rinse all utensils, bowls, counters, and hands.
- Use separate cutting boards for foods of animal origin and other foods.
- Never return cooked meat to the same plate used for raw meat.
- Marinade or barbeque sauce used on raw meat should not be used on cooked meat.
- Avoid consuming unpasteurized milk and untreated surface water.
- Wash hands with soap after contact with pets and pet feces.