



Campylobacter infection

Information for patients from Infection Prevention and Control

You have been found to have Campylobacter bacteria in your stool (poo). This leaflet explains:

- what Campylobacter is
- what the signs and symptoms are; and
- how it is spread and treated.

We hope the leaflet will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.

What is Campylobacter?

Campylobacter is a bacterium which is at present the most common cause of food poisoning in the UK. It is more common in summer, and children and young adults have a higher incidence of infection.

Where does it come from?

Campylobacter is most often found in wild and domestic cattle, poultry, sheep, and goats. However, puppies, kittens, and birds are also a source of infection.

How did I get it?

You can catch the infection in a number of ways.

- By eating contaminated food, such as chicken, that has not been properly cooked.
- By drinking water or untreated milk that has the bacteria in it.
- By having contact with farm animals or pets with diarrhoea.
- By eating foods that have been contaminated by raw meat during storage.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Most people infected with Campylobacter have stomach ache, diarrhoea, and a fever. Vomiting is uncommon.

After swallowing the bacteria, it can take between 1 and 11 days for the illness to develop. However, it most commonly develops in 2 to 5 days.

How is the infection treated?

In most cases there is no special treatment, except to drink plenty of water and rest.

In severe cases patients may be given antibiotics. However, diarrhoea often continues for 2 to 3 weeks even though patients have had antibiotics.

Why am I being cared for in a single room?

Single rooms help prevent the spread of Campylobacter to other vulnerable patients on the ward. The risk of spreading the infection is also greatly reduced if visitors and staff wash and dry their hands thoroughly when leaving the isolation room / ward.

Can I have visitors?

All visitors should see the nurse-in-charge for advice before visiting.

The spread of Campylobacter from one person to another is uncommon. However, when leaving the isolation room / ward all visitors must wash their hands with soap and water, and dry them thoroughly.

How can I help prevent infection?

- Keep cooked and uncooked food separate in your kitchen.
- Cook all food properly, especially chicken.
- Do not drink untreated milk (milk straight from the cow).
- Keep milk bottles covered to stop birds pecking the tops and passing the bacteria to the milk.
- Do not drink untreated water from rivers and lakes.
- Be especially careful about drinking water and eating food when abroad.
- Wash your hands with soap and water and dry them thoroughly after:
 - touching pets or farm animals
 - before and after handling raw meat and poultry; and
 - after using the toilet.

An Environmental Health Officer may contact / visit you or your family as part of the investigation to find out how you got the infection.

What will happen at home?

If your doctors feel you are well enough, you may be discharged home whilst you still have diarrhoea. Please do not worry; the precautions taken in hospital are aimed at preventing the spread of infection to other ill and vulnerable patients.

The most important thing you and your family can do is make sure you continue with good personal hygiene. This includes hand washing, especially after using the toilet or before preparing food.

Campylobacter has to be reported to the **UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)**, who are responsible for the health of the general public. Someone from the local Health Protection Team may contact you, to ask you some questions. Please do not be concerned, this is routine.

Further Information

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to either the nurse-in-charge of the ward or the matron. If they are unable to help you or you need further information, please contact a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team on:

- **Kent and Canterbury Hospital**, Canterbury
Telephone: 01227 766877 extension 722-4216 or 722-6810
- **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital**, Margate
Telephone: 01843 225544 extension 725-3625 or 725-4234
- **William Harvey Hospital**, Ashford
Telephone: 01233 633331 extension 723-8202 or 723-8198

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

Please let us know:

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

You can let us know this by:

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net).

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient information leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

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