



# Campylobacter Enteritis (C. Jejeuni)

## What is it?

Campylobacter Enteritis is a bacterial disease of the small intestine most commonly caused by an organism called *Campylobacter jejuni* (C. jejeuni). It occurs worldwide and is commonly found to be a cause of travellers' diarrhea. In Canada and other industrialized countries, it occurs more often in children under five and young adults.

## How is it spread?

Animals, most frequently poultry and cattle, are sources of infection for humans. Puppies, kittens, other pets, swine, sheep, rodents and birds may also be sources. Most raw poultry is contaminated with *C. jejeuni*.

Swallowing the organism in undercooked meats, contaminated food and water, raw milk, contact with infected pets, farm animals or infants are all ways that *C. jejeuni* is spread to humans.

## What are the symptoms and when do they occur?

Symptoms appear one to 10 days (usually two to five days) after the organism is ingested and last for a week. Symptoms can include diarrhea (often bloody), abdominal pain, general unwell feeling, fever, nausea and/or vomiting. Serious complications can occur but are rare.

## When is a person infectious?

Persons with *C. jejeuni* can spread the disease during the infection, which may last from a few days to several weeks. Persons not treated with antibiotics may spread the disease for two to seven weeks even though symptoms may have subsided.

## How can I protect myself and prevent the spread?

To prevent spread to yourself or others, the following measures should be practiced:

- Practice thorough hand washing with soap and warm water.
- Thoroughly cook all meat and poultry.
- Only drink milk that has been pasteurized or water that has been chlorinated or boiled rapidly for one minute.
- Freeze raw poultry to help reduce the contamination of the poultry.



- Do not prepare food for anyone else if you have *C. jejeuni*.
- Never use a cutting board for more than one food item or for the same item after it has been cooked, unless the cutting board has been cleaned with a solution of one gallon of water mixed with one capful of bleach.
- Pets with diarrhea should be examined by a veterinarian. Pets with *C. jejeuni* can be treated with antibiotics to prevent the spread to humans.
- Water from a cistern connected to the eaves troughs is not a safe supply. Eaves troughs should not be connected to a cistern.

## Recommended absence

While symptoms are present, infected persons who work as food handlers or infected persons who provide care in hospitals, institutions where people live and day-care centres should be excluded from work.

*C. jejeuni* must be reported to the Medical Officer of Health per the Health Promotion and Protection Act.

For more information, please contact a member of Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit's Communicable Disease Team.

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