



Infection Prevention Team Newsletter March 2026

Campylobacter

Although most gastroenteritis infections are caused by viruses, it is important to remember that there are a few bacterial causes, with Campylobacter being just one example. Campylobacter is the most common bacterial cause of gastroenteritis with over 50,000 cases reported to UKHSA per year. However, this is likely much higher as only laboratory confirmed cases are reported. Therefore, number of Campylobacter infections per year in the UK is likely 9.3 times higher, estimating a 650,000 cases per year! Almost half of Campylobacter infections occur in people aged 50 -79 years old. Cases start to rise from April onwards and peak during June.

Outbreaks

Latest UKHSA figures from 2024 reported 33% of Campylobacter outbreaks in the UK occurred in care homes, with the other outbreaks occurring in restaurants, hotels and entertainment venues.

Source

Eating undercooked chicken and food products made from chicken or lamb liver products such as pâté. Incorrect food handling can result in cross contamination of food and so picked up from other foods, even salads. Campylobacter is naturally present in the gastrointestinal tract of many animals including livestock (poultry, sheep and cows) and domestic pets (cats and dogs).

Symptoms and treatment

Incubation period (time from infection to symptoms appearing) normally 2-5 days

Diarrhoea (often bloody stools), fever, stomach cramps, nausea and sometimes vomiting.

Infection with Campylobacter is a self-limited and symptoms spontaneously resolve in 1 week, without the need for any treatment. However, if the infection is severe or prolonged then antibiotics maybe required. People at higher risk of sever infection include children <5, older adults 65+ and those with a weakened immune system (on chemotherapy or had a transplant).

Some Campylobacter infections can be very serious and life threatening. Long-term health complications can also occur such as reactive arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome and Guilian-Barre syndrome (autoimmune disorder effective nerve function, if severe can lead to paralysis and respiratory failure).

Prevention

- ❖ Ensure food is prepared, cooked, handled and stored correctly follow FSA guidelines
- ❖ Good **hand hygiene** practice especially in the kitchen and handling pets and livestock

[Food hygiene | Food Standards Agency](#)

[Hand hygiene Policy for Care Home settings - Infection Prevention Control](#)

[Animals in a care home setting Policy for Care Home settings - Infection Prevention Control](#)