

Campylobacter

Description

Campylobacter is a type of gastroenteritis (‘food poisoning’) that is mainly spread by eating undercooked **contaminated** meat. It is the most common cause of food-borne illness in New Zealand. People and animals can carry and spread the infection even if they don’t have symptoms.

Campylobacter infection usually begins with a headache, muscle pain, fever and fatigue, and may cause diarrhoea which is sometimes blood stained, stomach pain and cramps which may be severe. People are infected with the illness when they swallow the bacteria. This may be from infected humans, animals, food (e.g. undercooked chicken, unpasteurised milk) and water. In an early childhood centre person-to-person spread may occur during toileting and nappy changing, but the risk is **uncommon**.

The illness may last for up to ten days; in some cases it may last for two to seven weeks and relapses may occur.

Exclusion period

A child or teacher with campylobacter needs to stay home until they are well and have been symptom free for at least **48 hours**.

Responsibilities of Early Childhood Education Service

- Tell parents that a child at the centre has campylobacter.
- Display information about campylobacter prominently at your centre and provide each family with a copy of this factsheet.
- Make sure all teachers, children and babies wash and dry their hands thoroughly after nappy changing, using the toilet and before eating or handling food and infant formula bottles. Uncooked foods such as fruit, crackers etc. can easily become contaminated by unwashed hands.
- Make sure that the children wash their hands after nappy change if they are able to, and that younger children have their hands washed with soap and water.
- The use of gloves is **not** recommended as they are **not usually a hygiene advantage**. The most common problem with use of gloves is the sense of false security they can create. A person wearing gloves will be less aware of soiled hands than a person with bare hands, and is at greater risk of contaminating the environment around them than a person using bare hands.
- Provide good supervision of children during farm visits and make sure all children and teachers wash and dry their hands carefully after handling animals.
- Wash all toys and surfaces with hot soapy water and then disinfect with a solution of diluted bleach.

Make up a new bleach solution daily using a diluted bleach concentration. Check on your bottle of bleach for the percentage of sodium hypochlorite, and make up as per table below.

Strength of bottle	Bleach (ml)	Water (ml)	Total (ml)
1%	100	900	1000
2%	50	950	1000
3%	33	967	1000
4%	25	975	1000
5%	20	980	1000

- Wash smaller toys in the dishwasher.
- Remove play dough, slimes, gloop, etc. and water-play until there are no more cases of campylobacter.

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- If you are cleaning poo, first clean with detergent and warm water, then use bleach solution to disinfect. Wear a mask, apron and gloves and wash your hands before and after putting PPE on. Be aware of what you touch when wearing gloves to avoid contaminating the surrounding area.
- Steam clean carpets if poo has contaminated them.

What to do when there are multiple children with the same symptoms:

- Please ensure all parents and visitors to the centre wash their hands on arrival and departure from the centre. It is preferable to use soap and water, but if this is not practicable an alcohol-based hand sanitiser can be used.
- Children and staff should wash and dry their hands with soap and water, and the use of hand sanitiser is in addition to hand washing, and should not be used instead of hand washing.

Please contact Regional Public Health on 04 570 9002 in the following situations:

- More than 3 cases in a 48-hour period or 4 cases in a 7 day period.
- Number of sick children and/or staff double in a short timeframe.
- Children or staff have bloody diarrhoea.
- Children or staff have any unusual symptoms and/or pattern of disease.
- Anyone is hospitalised as a result of their illness.
- You have concerns about the length of the outbreak or any other issues.
- There was a party or event held at the centre during the time period of the illness.

Responsibilities of parents

- Keep your child at home until they are well and have been symptom free for at least 48 hours.
- Ensure the ill person has frequent amounts of fluid to prevent dehydration. Contact your GP or Healthline on 0800 611 116 for further advice.

References/resources

<https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/c/campylobacter/>

<https://www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/campylobacter-ecoli-and-salmonella>