

FACT SHEET

Campylobacter

Common clinical features

Diarrhoea, abdominal pain, malaise, fever, nausea and vomiting are the common symptoms with varying severity. The illness is frequently over within 2 – 5 days and usually lasts no more than 10 days. Blood and mucus may be present in liquid stools. Some people infected have no symptoms. Uncommon complications include joint pains (arthritis) and Guillain-Barré (a disease of the nervous system that can lead to temporary paralysis).

Incubation period

1 – 11 days (usually 2 to 5 days)

Where is it found?

Gastrointestinal tract of farm livestock and poultry, wildlife including birds, and domestic pets.

How is it acquired by affected individuals?

From raw or undercooked meat (especially poultry), unpasteurised milk, bird-pecked milk on doorsteps, untreated water, and domestic pets with diarrhoea. It is rare for Campylobacter to be passed from person to person, only if personal hygiene is very poor.

How does the laboratory confirm the diagnosis?

The bacteria are cultured on selective media from faeces samples and results are usually available in 2 – 3 days.

How is it treated?

Symptomatic treatment and rehydration. Antibiotics are required only in severe cases.