



Campylobacter, E. coli and Salmonella

**About these infections
and how to prevent them**

What are Campylobacter (say 'cam-pile-oh-bac-ter'), E. coli (say 'ee-koh-lie') and Salmonella (say 'sal-muh-nel-uh')?

Campylobacter, Escherichia coli (E. coli) and Salmonella are bacteria found in the gut of infected people, birds and other animals. They can also be found in water and some foods.

People with Campylobacter infections (called Campylobacteriosis), E.coli infections and Salmonella infections (called Salmonellosis) usually get diarrhoea (runny poo). Some people, especially young children and older people, can get very ill and may need hospital treatment.

Although most types of E. coli are harmless, some types, such as shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC, also called verocytotoxin-producing *E. coli* or VTEC), can cause serious illness.

How do you get infected?

People or animals with these infections pass the bacteria on in their faeces (poo). Without good hygiene and hand washing, the bacteria can get onto food and surfaces and into water and soil.

You get infected when you swallow the bacteria, for example by:

- handling raw meat or poultry
- eating contaminated food, especially raw or undercooked food (especially poultry – like chicken, or red meat)
- drinking contaminated water
- drinking raw (unpasteurised) milk or eating raw milk products
- having contact with faeces from infected people or animals
- touching contaminated surfaces such as toys, bathroom taps, door handles, and nappy change tables and then touching your mouth.
- swimming or playing in contaminated 'recreational water', such as rivers and lakes.

Travelling overseas can increase the risk of getting these infections, especially to countries with unsafe drinking water and inadequate food hygiene practices.

Illness: Symptoms and timeframes

Campylobacter, E.coli and Salmonella infections cause similar symptoms. You may have some or all of the following symptoms.

- Diarrhoea, which may have blood in it
- Stomach pain or cramps, which may be severe
- Nausea
- Vomiting.
- Flu-like symptoms, including headache, muscle pains, fever and fatigue (feeling very tired)

Campylobacter infection symptoms appear 1 to 10 days (usually 2 to 5 days) after becoming infected. Symptoms can last for up to 10 days but most people will get better within 7 days.

E. coli infection symptoms appear 2 to 10 days (usually 2 to 3 days) after becoming infected. Most people will get better within 7 days.

Salmonella infection symptoms appear 6 to 72 hours (usually 12 to 36 hours) after becoming infected. Symptoms can last for up to 10 days but most people will get better within 5 to 7 days.

If you have symptoms

If you have symptoms, you should do the following.

- **Go to your usual GP, hauora or healthcare provider** if your symptoms are severe or last for more than 3 to 4 days. They may ask to test a sample (small amount) of your faeces. Your doctor will give you advice on how to collect the sample and what to do with it.
- **Take medicines** if your doctor prescribes them.
- **Drink plenty of water** while you have diarrhoea or vomiting.
- **Go back to your usual GP, hauora or healthcare provider** if you have a child that is ill and is drinking much less than usual or showing signs of dehydration (passing less urine (wee) than usual, dry mouth, sunken eyes or seeming drowsy).
- **Stay away from school, early learning services or work** until at least 48 hours (2 days) after the symptoms have gone.
- **Do not go swimming in a pool or spa pool or share bathwater** if you have diarrhoea. You need to wait at least 2 weeks after you last had diarrhoea.

- **Avoid preparing food for other people.** If you must do so, wash and dry your hands well first.
- **Follow the advice** of your doctor or local public health service.

Campylobacteriosis, shiga toxin-producing E. coli and salmonellosis are all notifiable diseases – this means your GP, hauora or healthcare provider will inform your local public health service if you become infected. The public health service may contact you to find out how you were infected. This helps to prevent other people from getting sick.

Preventing these diseases

To prevent getting Campylobacter, E. coli or Salmonella infections or passing them on, you can do the following.

Wash your hands

Wash your hands thoroughly and often using clean, warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds, cleaning between fingers and under fingernails, rinsing well and drying on a clean dry towel or paper towel. To reduce the spread of these and other bacteria, it is important you do this:

- Before eating and preparing food
- After handling raw meat
- After going to the toilet, changing nappies or helping others use the bathroom
- After caring for people who are ill
- After contact with pets or farm animals
- After gardening.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer can also be used to clean hands when you are not able to use soap, water, and a towel to dry them well. If using hand sanitiser, make sure you use enough product to cover your hands, rub it in and allow it to dry.

Suitable cleaning

Clean hard surfaces and objects (including toys) that may have become contaminated with a suitable cleaning solution, such as water and detergent. Then use a sanitizing solution that contains 0.1% sodium hypochlorite (plain bleach) and leave for at least 10 minutes.

Follow food safety practices

- Thaw meat in the fridge and not at room temperature.
- Keep raw meat covered and separate from other foods, and store at the bottom of the fridge.
- Do not wash raw chicken. This doesn't kill bacteria and can spread bacteria to other items in the kitchen, where they can contaminate other food.
- Use separate chopping boards, plates and utensils when preparing raw foods and cooked foods, or wash them well in hot water with dishwashing liquid before using them for other foods.
- Cook chicken thoroughly until the juices are clear.
- Cook all minced meat patties and sausages thoroughly.
- Avoid drinking raw (unpasteurised) milk and eating raw milk products.
- Avoid eating shellfish which has been gathered from contaminated waters.
- Wash fruit and vegetables before use, especially if you're eating them raw.

For further information on food safety visit mpi.govt.nz/safe-food-at-home.

Follow safe drinking water practices

- Avoid drinking water that has not been treated – including water from lakes, rivers, streams or rainwater from a roof collection.
- If you have to drink untreated water from lakes, rivers, streams or rainwater from a roof collection, it should be made safe first by bringing it to the boil, disinfecting it or putting it through an appropriate treatment unit.
- If you are planning on going camping or tramping in a rural area, consider where you will get your drinking water from and whether it will be safe. It may be safest to take your own bottled water with you.

For more information on how to make your drinking-water safe visit taumataarowai.govt.nz.

To discuss your health and treatment options, speak to your usual GP, hauora or healthcare provider. You can also call Healthline free on **0800 611 116**.



For more information on these infections and how to prevent them scan this QR code, visit kidshealth.org.nz or contact your local public health service.



To find the contact details for your local public health service, scan this QR code or visit tewhatauora.govt.nz/publichealthcontacts.

This resource is available from healthed.govt.nz or your local Authorised Provider. November 2025.
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