What is campylobacteriosis?
Campylobacter is a type of bacteria that can cause illness. Most people who become ill with campylobacter get diarrhea, cramping, abdominal pain, and fever from two to five days after exposure to the bacteria. The diarrhea may be bloody and can be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. The illness usually lasts less than one week.

How do you get campylobacteriosis and how is it spread?
Most cases of campylobacteriosis are associated with handling raw poultry or eating raw or undercooked poultry meat. One way to become infected is to cut poultry meat on a cutting board, and then use the unwashed cutting board or utensil to prepare vegetables or other uncooked foods. The Campylobacter organisms from the raw meat can then spread to the other foods. The organism is not usually spread from person to person, but this can happen, especially with small children in diapers. Larger outbreaks due to Campylobacter are usually related to drinking unpasteurized milk or contaminated water. Animals can also be infected, and some people have acquired their infection from contact with the infected stool of an ill dog or cat. Campylobacter in pets seems to be more common in young puppies and kittens.

What is the treatment for campylobacteriosis?
Almost all persons infected with Campylobacter will recover without any specific treatment. Patients should drink plenty of fluids as long as the diarrhea lasts. In more severe cases, antibiotics such as erythromycin or azithromycin can be used. Antibiotics are not recommended for routine cases.

How serious is campylobacteriosis?
The vast majority of people who get campylobacteriosis recover completely within two to five days, although sometimes recovery can take up to 10 days. It is very unusual, but some people may have arthritis following campylobacteriosis. A very rare complication is a disease called Guillain-Barré syndrome, which occurs when a person's immune system is "triggered" to attack the body's own nerves, leading to temporary paralysis.

If I have campylobacter, should I worry about spreading the infection to others?
Although person-to-person spread is not common, the illness can be contagious through the stool. Follow these guidelines to avoid spreading it to others:

- Wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before eating or preparing food.
- If you work in food service, custodial, or childcare do not go to work while you have diarrhea. Food service workers should always wash their hands frequently and avoid bare-hand contact with ready to eat foods.
- If your young child has campylobacteriosis, he or she should not attend childcare until the diarrhea symptoms have disappeared. Young children with any diarrhea illness should not attend childcare.
- If you work in health care doing direct patient care, you should not go to work until the diarrhea disappears.

How can I prevent campylobacteriosis and other food-borne diseases?

- Cook all poultry products thoroughly. If you are served undercooked poultry in a restaurant, send it back for further cooking.
- Wash hands with soap after handling raw meat and poultry.
- Prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen: Use two separate cutting boards for meats and vegetables. After preparing raw meat and poultry, carefully clean all cutting boards, countertops and utensils with soap and hot water.
- Do not drink unpasteurized milk or fruit juices, or eat unpasteurized cheeses or yogurt
- Make sure that persons with diarrhea, especially children, wash their hands carefully and frequently with soap to reduce the risk of spreading the infection.
- Wash hands with soap after having contact with pet feces. Make sure sick puppies and kittens are evaluated and treated by a veterinarian.