

# Campylobacter: a concern for us all

**Remember the London 2012 opening ceremony and the Olympic stadium filled to bursting point with spectators? Well, try to envisage that huge crowd multiplied by three. It's about a quarter of a million people. That's how many people in the UK could be struck down by campylobacter this year.**

Campylobacter is the most common cause of food poisoning in the UK. You can't see it, smell it or even taste it on food, but if it affects you, you won't forget it.

Campylobacter poisoning can result in abdominal pain, severe diarrhoea and sometimes vomiting, and can be particularly severe in small children and older people. In certain cases it can also lead to irritable bowel syndrome, reactive arthritis and Guillain-Barré syndrome – a serious condition of the nervous system. At its worst, it can kill.

## How do you get it?

About four in five cases of campylobacter infections in the UK come from contaminated poultry. One of the main ways to get and spread campylobacter is through cross-contamination.

Washing raw chicken can actually spread campylobacter by splashing it onto hands, work surfaces, clothing and cooking equipment.

## Food Safety Week

Campylobacter will be at the centre of this year's Food Safety Week (16–22 June), which will provide a focus for promoting good food hygiene that can help to reduce the risk of foodborne illness amongst consumers. Local authorities will be working to spread the word, alongside commercial partners and the media. Our main message to consumers will be:

- Don't wash raw chicken

Washing raw chicken can spread germs by splashing. Thorough cooking will kill any bacteria present.

# Don't wash raw chicken



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## Acting on Campylobacter Together

The FSA is also spearheading a campaign to bring together work across the whole food chain to tackle the problem. As part of this campaign we are asking:

**Farmers and producers** to reduce the number of flocks of broiler chickens (grown for meat) that carry campylobacter when they are presented for slaughter

**Slaughterhouses and processors** to ensure that their processes minimise the levels of contamination in the birds they produce

**Caterers** to make sure that their staff are aware of the risks from raw poultry and work harder to avoid cross-contamination during handling or from under-cooking

**Local government** partners to raise awareness of campylobacter and ensure that food businesses using chilled poultry meat are aware of the risks and keep to the highest standards of hygiene

**Retailers and supermarkets** to play their role by advising their customers not to wash raw chicken and to cook it thoroughly

All the major supermarkets will be joining the campaign with features on campylobacter in their customer and staff magazines and on their websites. They have also committed to provide clearer information on packs of their raw chicken and turkey, advising people not to wash these products before cooking.

By acting on campylobacter together we can provide safer food for the nation and save lives.

## Spread the word, not the germs!



**Fewer  
infected  
birds**  
presented for slaughter

**Clearer  
supermarket  
packaging**



**4 in 5  
cases come from  
contaminated poultry**

