



# Campylobacter

1. What is **Campylobacter**?

2. How EFSA supports EU efforts to combat **Campylobacter**

3. EU **cooperation** to protect **public health**

## 1. What is **Campylobacter**?

- *Campylobacter* is a bacterium that can cause an illness called campylobacteriosis in humans. With about 200,000 human cases every year, this disease is the most frequently reported food-borne illness in the European Union (EU). However, the actual number of cases is believed to be around 9 million each year. The cost of campylobacteriosis to public health systems and to lost productivity in the EU is estimated by EFSA to be around EUR 2.4 billion a year.
- Raw poultry meat is often contaminated with *Campylobacter* since the bacterium can live in the intestines of healthy birds. It is also found in pigs and cattle. Eating **undercooked chicken**, or ready-to-eat foods that have been in contact with raw chicken, is the most common source of infection.

- Usual symptoms are fever, diarrhoea and abdominal cramps. Safe handling of raw meat and other raw food ingredients, thorough cooking and good kitchen hygiene, can prevent or reduce the risk posed by contaminated food.

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## 2. How EFSA supports EU efforts to combat **Campylobacter**

The European Food Safety Authority provides independent scientific support and advice through the collection and analysis of data on the prevalence of *Campylobacter*; by assessing the risks posed by the bacterium and advising on possible control and mitigation options. EFSA's findings are used by risk managers in the EU and the Member States in their decision-making, and support the setting of possible control options and reduction targets for *Campylobacter* in the food chain.

### ■ **Annual monitoring of *Campylobacter* in animals and food to measure progress**

EU-wide data on the presence of *Campylobacter* in the food chain as well as the prevalence of animal and human infection are collected and analysed in annual EU Summary Reports prepared by EFSA and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

### ■ **EU-wide surveys on the prevalence of *Campylobacter***

EFSA has produced baseline survey reports on the prevalence of *Campylobacter* in chickens and on the risk factors that contribute to the prevalence of *Campylobacter* in chickens and derived food.

### ■ **Risk assessments and recommendations**

EFSA evaluates the food safety risks of *Campylobacter* and provides scientific advice on control options at the request of risk managers or on its own initiative. In its assessments, EFSA has found that achieving set reduction targets for *Campylobacter* in chicken flocks in the EU would significantly reduce the risk of human contamination. Recommendations include pre-slaughter measures that could reduce public health risk by 50%, meat production measures that could reduce public health risk by 90% or more, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of achieving set reduction targets.



### 3. EU cooperation to protect public health

To protect consumers from this public health threat, the EU has adopted an integrated approach to food safety from the farm to the fork. The approach consists of both risk assessment and risk management

measures involving all key actors: EU Member States, European Commission, European Parliament, EFSA and ECDC. The approach is supported by timely and effective risk communication activities.



Diagram: EU actors dealing with zoonoses

#### Did you know?

- Campylobacteriosis is the most commonly reported zoonotic disease in the EU.
- *Campylobacter* is mostly found in chicken meat.
- Handling, preparation and consumption of chicken meat may directly account for 20% to 30% of human cases of campylobacteriosis.
- Consumers can reduce the risk of falling ill from potentially contaminated food by following good hand hygiene and food handling practices. These include refrigerating foods promptly; regularly washing hands and surfaces such as cutting boards and dishes; separating raw meats from other foods; cooking food to the right temperatures.