

Salmonella

What is Salmonella infection?

Salmonella are bacteria that can cause diarrhea in people. *Salmonella* bacteria can make you sick if they get into your mouth.

Where does Salmonella come from? How is it spread?

The most common cause of Salmonella infection is from eating contaminated foods. These foods could include raw or undercooked meat, poultry, fish, eggs, raw milk and raw milk products, raw fruits and vegetables and their juices.

Salmonella can be spread to people through contact with infected animals, including birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles, pocket pets (rodents, hedgehogs), livestock, dogs, cats, their food and their environment. Infection can happen if the bacteria from your hands are transferred to your mouth.

Salmonella can be found in oceans, lakes, rivers, streams and in water supplies. Travelers to warm climates and developing countries can get *Salmonella*.

Salmonella can be spread by:

- People with Salmonella infection that handle or prepare food for others.
- Food handlers with unsafe food handling, poor hand washing and personal hygiene
- Infants and toddlers who are not toilet trained, to their family members, caregivers and playmates
- People who do not get sick or show symptoms but carry the bacteria in their intestines
- People with diarrhea that contaminate their environment in homes and hospitals

Salmonella is not spread by coughing, kissing, or through normal, everyday contact with neighbors or friends.

If you are employed as a food handler or a health care worker, go home or stay home if you have diarrhea. Report your symptoms to your manager.

What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms usually start about 6 to 72 hours after the *Salmonella* gets into your mouth. You might be sick for about seven days or for several weeks. Symptoms can include:

- fever
- headache
- diarrhea (sometimes with blood)
- cramps
- nausea and loss of appetite
- vomiting sometimes

See a Health Care Provider (Doctor or Nurse Practitioner) if you think you are sick from *Salmonella*. Ask that your diarrhea be tested.

Am I at risk?

Anyone can become sick from a *Salmonella* infection. Those at greatest risk include:

- Children under 5 years of age, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems,
- Pregnant women

Do I need treatment?

Salmonella infections do not need to be treated most of the time. Antibiotics may make it harder for your body to get rid of *Salmonella*. It is not recommended to take medicines to stop the diarrhea. Drink fluids, like water and juice, to stay hydrated.

Babies and people who have problems fighting disease may need to be treated.

How can I prevent *Salmonella* infection?

Safe food handling, proper hand washing and good personal hygiene are the most important ways to prevent getting and passing on *Salmonella*.

Wash your hands well:

- Before preparing food
- After using the toilet, helping others toilet, or changing diapers
- After touching animals and pets, pet food, treats and toys, and cleaning up after your pet

Foods that are contaminated with *Salmonella* bacteria do not look or smell bad. People who have *Salmonella* infection should not prepare food for others because they may contaminate the food and make other people sick.

Follow these four simple steps to “Be Food Safe”.

Clean

- Wash your hands before preparing food, and wash often during preparation. Washing is especially important after handling raw meat, poultry, fish, seafood or raw eggs.
- Wash fruits and vegetables under clean, cold, running water before cooking or eating.
- Clean, and then sanitize cutting boards, utensils, and countertops after preparing raw meat, poultry, egg products and raw vegetables.
 - **Sanitize** with a mild bleach and water solution: mix 1 ml (¼ teaspoon) of unscented household bleach into 500 ml (2 cups) of water.

Separate

- Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, eggs and their juices away from other food items while shopping, during storage in the refrigerator
- When preparing food, keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and raw eggs away from food that won't be cooked. Use separate utensils for raw and cooked foods.

Cook

- Cook all meat, fish and poultry to safe temperatures. Use a food thermometer.
 - Cook whole poultry to 82°C/180°F.
 - Cook food mixtures that includes poultry, egg, meat, fish to 74°C/165°F
 - Cook poultry (other than whole poultry) and ground poultry to 74°C/165°F
 - Cook pork, pork products, ground meat that does not contain poultry to 71°C/160°F

- Keep hot foods hot above 60°C/140°F if not served right away.

Chill

- Keep the fridge at 4°C (40°F) or below.
- Chill leftovers and takeout foods within 2 hours.
- Thaw food in the refrigerator, or under cold running water, or in the microwave just before cooking. Never thaw at room temperature.

Other Considerations:

- ✓ Use only pasteurized milk and foods made from pasteurized milk.
- ✓ Use only pasteurized juices or ciders.

- ✓ Use only eggs that are graded, clean, and free of cracks.
- ✓ Eat only foods that contain well cooked eggs. Homemade eggnog, mayonnaise, Hollandaise sauce, raw cookie dough, salad dressings, ice cream and mousses could have *Salmonella* bacteria from raw or lightly cooked egg.

- ✓ Keep pets away from food storage and preparation areas.
- ✓ Keep reptiles and turtles out of homes where there are infants, children 5 years old or less, elderly or people who have problems fighting disease.

- ✓ Drink water from a safe supply. Lakes, streams, or other sources are untreated and may not be safe. Keep water out of your mouth while swimming in lakes or pools.

If you have a *Salmonella* infection, your local Public Health Unit will be in contact with you and can answer any questions you may have.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Infectious Disease Control Team at 519-663-5317 ext. 2330 or go to www.healthunit.com

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