

Salmonellosis

Public Health – Factsheet

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonella is a bacteria, or germ, commonly found in the intestines (stomachs and bowels) of domestic and wild animals. There are many different kinds of Salmonella bacteria. A person infected with the bacteria becomes ill with salmonellosis, which is sometimes referred to as food poisoning.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

Symptoms can include stomach cramps, diarrhea, fever, nausea and vomiting. Sometimes diarrhea can be so severe that a person loses large amounts of bodily fluids (electrolytes) and can become very ill. At this point, the person should get medical help. The elderly and the very young (infants) are most at risk of developing a severe illness.

When do the symptoms start and how long do they last?

Symptoms can start suddenly, anywhere within six to 72 hours after coming in contact with the germ. Most people begin to feel sick 12 to 36 hours after being infected. The illness usually lasts four to seven days and most people get better without any treatment.

What causes salmonellosis?

Eating contaminated foods, such as raw meat, poultry and eggs that have not been cooked properly, is the most common cause of the illness. As well, raw (unpasteurized) milk and raw milk products, and contaminated water, can also contain the bacteria. You can also become infected by touching the feces (poop) of infected humans (especially infants with diarrhea) and domestic or wild animals, without following up with proper hand-washing.

How is salmonellosis spread?

Salmonella is usually spread by a contaminated (tainted) food or other substance that goes in your mouth. You can become exposed to Salmonella by:

- touching raw pet treats without following up with proper hand-washing
- not washing fresh fruits and vegetables before eating them

- not thoroughly cleaning counters/work surfaces used to prepare raw meat and other foods in the kitchen

Food can also become contaminated by people who handle food regularly (ex: cooks, grocery clerks, etc.), if they don't thoroughly wash their hands with soap after handling raw meat or after using the bathroom. The disease, salmonellosis, is more common in summer than in winter.

What should you do if you think you have salmonellosis?

If you think you have salmonellosis, you should see your doctor for testing, advice and treatment.

How is salmonellosis diagnosed?

The diagnosis is confirmed when Salmonella bacteria is found in a person's stool (poop). Sometimes, it is also found in the blood. A sample of the stool must be sent to a lab, which uses special methods to grow and positively identify the bacteria.

How is the infection treated?

Most people will recover without any treatment. Your doctor will decide if treatment is necessary in your particular case. People with salmonellosis should drink plenty of clear fluids (ex: water, clear juices, soups) to prevent dehydration caused by the diarrhea. Resting and eating easily digested foods (such as bananas, rice and crackers) will help recovery. The use of over-the-counter medicine to stop diarrhea (ex: Immodium) is **not** recommended.

How can I protect myself from salmonellosis?

Here are some ways to reduce your chances of getting salmonellosis:

- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after:
 - using the toilet
 - changing diapers
 - eating or preparing food
 - handling animals (pets, farm animals or wild animals)

Salmonellosis

- Avoid eating beef, pork or poultry that has not been thoroughly cooked.
- Avoid eating runny eggs.
- Avoid consuming raw or unpasteurized milk or other raw milk products.
- Wash produce thoroughly before eating.
- Store and refrigerate food properly.
- Thoroughly clean work surfaces (ex: counters, cutting boards) used to prepare raw meat and other foods to prevent cross contamination.
- When travelling in underdeveloped countries, you should avoid:
 - raw foods that cannot be peeled
 - cooked food that is not hot
 - food from street vendors

If travelling where the water supply may be unsafe, drink bottled water and avoid drinks with ice.

Consider Others

Don't pass it on.

If I become infected, how can I avoid giving salmonellosis to others?

If you become ill with salmonellosis, you should stop working while you have diarrhea and vomiting. It is recommended you don't go back to work until 48 hours (two days) after your last diarrhea or vomiting incident. This will give you a chance to recover, and will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to others.

All people with salmonellosis should wash their hands more often. This is especially important after going to the toilet and before handling food. It is important to realize that you can make others sick.

Are there certain jobs where the bacteria can be passed on more easily?

Yes. If you work in a job that involves food handling or close contact with others (ex: kitchens or restaurants, hospitals, daycares, personal care homes) and you become ill with salmonellosis, it is especially important that you stop working while you have diarrhea and vomiting, and not go back to work until 48 hours (two days) after your last diarrhea or vomiting incident.

What about daycare? If my child becomes infected with salmonellosis, can I send him/her anyway?

If your child has the illness, it is recommended that he/she not go to daycare during this time. If this is not possible, the child should be cared for in a separate area of the daycare, until the diarrhea has stopped.

What else do I need to know?

Reptiles (ex: pet turtles, snakes, lizards) and amphibians (ex: frogs, salamanders) can carry Salmonella germs. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after handling these animals or after contact with their environment/cages or food. Young children should avoid handling these pets or having contact with their environment or food. Infants should be kept away from pet feeding areas.

Some pet treats that are made from other animals (ex: pigs' ears, frozen rodents) can also carry Salmonella germs and have been known to cause illness in humans. It is important to wash your hands thoroughly after handling these kinds of pet treats. Young children, the elderly, or people with weakened immune systems (ex: those living with HIV or cancer, transplant patients receiving immunosuppressive drugs) should not touch pet treats that are made from animal parts.

For more information

Talk to your doctor or other health care provider, your local public health unit or call Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 in Winnipeg; toll free 1-888-315-9257 outside Winnipeg.

Information is also available on the Manitoba Health website at www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/salmonellosis.pdf