

SALMONELLOSIS

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a disease caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. It usually affects the intestines or stomach and occasionally the bloodstream.

What are the symptoms of a *Salmonella* infection?

The most common symptoms are mild or severe diarrhea, fever, abdominal pain, headache, and occasionally vomiting. Blood infections can be quite serious, especially in the very young or elderly. The symptoms generally appear 1 to 3 days after exposure.

How is salmonellosis spread?

Salmonella bacteria may be spread by eating contaminated or “dirty” water or food (particularly undercooked eggs and poultry). Infected persons can spread the bacteria by not washing their hands after going to the bathroom and then handling food that other people will eat. Another way to get this disease is by having direct contact with stool (feces) from an infected person or animal and then transferring the bacteria to the mouth from the hands.

How long are people contagious?

Most persons carry the bacteria for several days to several weeks after illness. A small percentage of infected persons carry the bacteria for a year or longer.

Who gets salmonellosis?

Anyone can get salmonellosis but it is recognized more often in infants and children. Because there are many different strains of *Salmonella*, salmonellosis can re-occur throughout a person's lifetime.

What treatment is available for people with salmonellosis?

Most *Salmonella* infections will go away without treatment. Persons with diarrhea should drink plenty of fluids. However, if the *Salmonella* has invaded a person's bloodstream, your health care provider may recommend treatment with antibiotics.

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work or daycare?

Since the bacteria is found in stool, children should not go to daycare or school while they have diarrhea and food handlers should be excluded from work. Daycare attendees and workers and food handlers may return to daycare/work after two negative stool culture results.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting salmonellosis?

You can decrease your chance of coming in contact with *Salmonella* by the following practices:

- Wash hands frequently with water and soap, and especially after using the toilet, changing a diaper or before preparing and/or eating food. (Sanitizing gel may be substituted when hands are not visibly soiled.)
- Avoid food or water from sources that may be contaminated.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables prior to eating or chopping.
- Always treat raw poultry, beef and pork as if they are contaminated and handle accordingly.
- Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping on other foods.
- Refrigerate foods promptly; minimize time kept at room temperature.
- Immediately washing cutting boards and counters used for preparation to prevent cross contamination with other foods.
- Ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature is reached, particularly when cooking in a microwave.
- Avoid chicks, ducklings, turtles and other reptiles as pets for small children.

