

# Salmonellosis

## What is Salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an intestinal infection caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. These bacteria are the most common cause of food poisoning and can be picked up worldwide.

While most people recover from salmonellosis without treatment, others (infants, the elderly and people who are immunocompromised) may require hospitalization.

## What are the symptoms of Salmonellosis?

Typical symptoms include sudden onset of stomach cramps accompanied with diarrhea, nausea, fever, chills, headache and vomiting.

Symptoms usually appear within 12 to 36 hours after ingesting the bacteria, but may develop up to 72 hours afterwards. The illness can last from several days to several weeks.

Some individuals who are infected with the bacteria may not get sick or show symptoms, but they can carry the bacteria and spread the infection to others.

## How does Salmonellosis spread?

*Salmonella* infection usually occurs when people eat food contaminated with the bacteria. *Salmonella* bacteria are commonly found in the intestines of livestock, fowl, cats, dogs, rodents, turtles, exotic pets and other animals. Raw meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs and unpasteurized milk may carry *Salmonella*. If these foods are not properly cooked, the bacteria can survive and cause illness when the foods are eaten.

*Salmonella* bacteria can also be passed from person to person through feces on unwashed hands.

Animals, birds, reptiles and some pets may carry the *Salmonella* bacteria without showing symptoms. People can pick up the *Salmonella* bacteria during contact with animals and their feces.

## How is Salmonellosis treated?

Most people with salmonellosis will recover in five to seven days without treatment. People with severe diarrhea may require rehydration, possibly with intravenous fluids.

Antibiotics are not typically required but may be prescribed for people with weaker immune systems such as: young infants, the elderly, those with chronic medical conditions, HIV-positive individuals, or persons in whom the infection has spread beyond the intestines.



## How can Salmonellosis be prevented?

- Practice thorough handwashing. In particular, make sure hands are properly washed:
  - after using the toilet
  - changing diapers
  - handling pets livestock, reptiles
  - before preparing food
- Clean and sanitize counter tops and utensils after contact with raw meats and poultry, especially before using these areas to prepare ready-to-eat foods.
- Avoid cross-contamination of food. Keep uncooked meats separate from produce, cooked foods and ready to eat foods.
- Cook meat, poultry and egg products thoroughly. Use a probe thermometer to be sure foods are cooked to a safe temperature. Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm.
- Avoid using raw eggs, as in homemade eggnogs, salad dressing, ice cream and desserts. Never use dirty or cracked eggs.
- Cook stuffing separately from the bird (poultry).
- Keep cold foods at 4°C or lower. Keep hot foods at 60°C or higher.
- Avoid raw or unpasteurized milk or other dairy products. Never let children sample raw milk directly from the animal.
- Drink water from a safe supply. Have well water tested to make sure it is safe to drink.
- If ill with diarrhea, avoid preparing or handling food.

Note: Immunocompromised persons or small infants should avoid contact with pets and reptiles.

