

# SALMONELLA

# FACTSHEET

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## What is Salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an infection caused by a bacteria group called Salmonella. These bacteria are a common cause of diarrheal illness but can also cause other types of illness. These bacteria are often found in the digestive tract of a variety of animals as well as humans.

## Who gets Salmonellosis?

Anyone can get salmonellosis, but it occurs most often in infants and young children. Salmonellosis is more common in the summer than the winter.

## What are the symptoms of Salmonellosis?

The symptoms of salmonellosis include fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea. The elderly and infants are at risk for dehydration. Headache may also be present. Symptoms usually appear within 12-36 hours after being infected but may take as long as 72 hours to appear.

## How is Salmonellosis spread?

Salmonella is spread by eating or drinking contaminated food or water or by contact with infected people or animals. Salmonella can be found in the feces (stool) of ill and recently recovered persons and infections can be spread from person to person. A person is contagious as long as Salmonella can be found in their stool. Some pets can also spread salmonella, especially those with diarrhea, and people may become infected if they do not wash their hands after contact with their pet's feces. Reptiles (turtles, lizards, and snakes) and young birds (chicks and ducklings) are especially likely to pass salmonellosis to people.

## Where are the Salmonella bacteria found?

Salmonella bacteria occur worldwide. They are found in a wide range of wild and domestic animals. The bacteria often contaminate raw meats, eggs, and unpasteurized milk and cheese products. Salmonella has been found in contaminated raw vegetables and fruits.

## How is Salmonellosis treated?

Most people with Salmonellosis will recover without any specific treatment. Antibiotics and antidiarrheal drugs are generally not recommended for typical cases of this intestinal infection. Some people may require extra fluids to prevent dehydration. Consult with your physician if you are at risk for dehydration.

## Should a person with Salmonellosis be excluded from work or school?

People with active diarrhea who are unable to control their bowel movements (infants, young children, certain

handicapped individuals, etc.) should be excluded from settings such as day care or group activities where they may present a risk to others. Most infected people may return to work or school when their stools become formed provided that they carefully wash their hands after using the bathroom. Food handlers, health-care providers, and children in day care must obtain approval of the DC Department of Health before returning to work or school.

## How can Salmonellosis be prevented?

The following steps will decrease your risk of contracting or spreading Salmonellosis:

- Frequent hand washing with soap especially before and after preparing food or beverages, after using the bathroom, changing diapers, handling pets or their soiled litter, and gardening
- Ensure children's hand washing before meals, after using the bathroom, and handling pets
- Always treat raw poultry and other raw meats as if they were contaminated and handle accordingly
- Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags provided at the meat counter to prevent meat blood from dripping onto other foods
- Refrigerate foods promptly, minimize the time the food is kept at room temperature
- Cutting boards and counter tops used for food preparation should be washed immediately after use to prevent cross contamination with other foods
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats
- Ensure that the correct internal temperature is reached, particularly when using a microwave
- Avoid eating raw eggs or undercooking food that contains raw eggs
- Avoid eating uncooked foods containing eggs, such as, cookie dough
- Avoid drinking raw milk
- Wash any raw fruit or vegetable thoroughly before eating.

## Want more information?

Information about Salmonella and other related health topics can be found at the website [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call (202) 442-9371.

