

SALMONELLOSIS

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a gastrointestinal illness caused by any one of more than 2,000 types of salmonella bacteria (germ).

What are symptoms of salmonellosis?

Symptoms may include diarrhea (mild to severe), stomach cramps, vomiting, headache, fever, and loss of appetite. Dehydration (loss of body fluids) can be severe, particularly in infants. It is also possible to be infected with salmonella and not have any symptoms.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually occur within 1-3 days after exposure, occasionally symptoms occur as early as 6 hours or as long as 5 days later.

How is salmonellosis spread?

People are often infected by consuming food or water that is contaminated with the salmonella bacteria. Many animals (including reptiles, chickens, pigs, cows, dogs, cats), as well as people, can be infected and act as the source for spread of the infection. This occurs by:

1. Eating foods handled by an infected person who did not wash his/her hands well after using the bathroom
2. Eating raw eggs or undercooked egg products
3. Eating raw or undercooked poultry or other meats
4. Consuming unpasteurized (raw) milk or milk products
5. Failure to properly clean food preparation surfaces
6. Contaminated produce (e.g. sprouts, cantaloupe, mangos, etc)
7. Drinking untreated water
8. Inadequate hand washing after handling infected food or live animals

How is salmonellosis diagnosed and treated?

Salmonellosis is diagnosed by stool culture. Most people recover on their own without medication. Treatment will depend upon the severity of symptoms. Antibiotics and anti-diarrheal medicines are generally not recommended, although antibiotics may be prescribed for those with severe symptoms.

How long is a person infectious (contagious)?

This varies from person to person. The infectious period may vary from several days to many months. Those who have been treated with antibiotics tend to carry the bacteria longer than others.

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How can I prevent a salmonellosis infection?

1. Wash your hands well for 20 seconds with soap and water after using the bathroom or changing diapers. Make sure children also wash their hands well after going to the bathroom.
2. Wash your hands well before and after preparing food, especially after handling raw meat or poultry.
3. Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats and eggs.
4. Wash fruits and vegetables prior to consumption. Peel when possible.
5. Disinfect all utensils and kitchen surfaces after contact with raw meat. Use a bleach solution (1/4 teaspoon of bleach to 1 quart of cool water) to sanitize the kitchen area.
6. Cook all poultry to 165 degrees. Make certain that meat is white (not pink) and juices run clear (not bloody).
7. Use only pasteurized milk and milk products.
8. Wash your hands well after handling animals or pets and their waste.
9. Do not drink untreated water.

It is important that infected food handlers be excluded from their work until released by Snohomish Health District.

Salmonellosis is a Washington State reportable disease and must be reported to your local health department. In Snohomish County, contact Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response at 425.339.5278, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM-5:00PM.

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