



### **What is salmonellosis?**

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

### **What are symptoms of salmonellosis?**

Symptoms may include diarrhea (sometimes bloody), stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, headache, and fever.

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 3 weeks 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 properly wash their hands 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, tomatoes etc.)
7. Drinking untreated water
8. Inadequate hand washing after handling infected food or live animals
9. Having unprotected oral-anal contact with an infected person

### **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. Fluid and electrolyte replacement is the main form of treatment. Antibiotics and anti-diarrheal medicines are generally not recommended, although antibiotics may be prescribed for those with severe symptoms or a weakened immune system.

### **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.

### **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.

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3. Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats and eggs. Do not use dirty or cracked eggs.
4. Wash fruits and vegetables prior to consumption. Peel when possible.
5. Disinfect all utensils and kitchen surfaces after contact with raw meat.
6. Cook all poultry to 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Make certain that meat is white (not pink) and juices run clear (not bloody) before consumption.
7. Avoid unpasteurized products including unpasteurized milk, soft cheeses, juices, and cider.
8. Wash your hands well after handling animals or pets and their waste, pet food or pet treats.
9. Do not drink untreated water. Boil or disinfect untreated water before consumption.
10. It is discouraged to have chickens, ducklings, turtles, reptiles, or rodents as pets for small children.
11. Avoid any contact between reptiles and infants or those that are immunocompromised.

**It is important that infected food handlers be excluded from their work until 24 hours symptom free.**

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 425.339.3503, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM-5:00 PM.

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