
DISEASES: Salmonellosis

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

What is Salmonella?

Salmonella is a bacteria that can cause food-borne infection called Salmonellosis. Symptoms include sudden onset of fever, headache, diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea and sometimes vomiting. Symptoms can occur from 6 to 72 hours after becoming infected.

How is Salmonellosis Spread?

Salmonella infection is spread by eating food contaminated by feces of an infected animal or person, or by drinking contaminated water. It can be spread from person-to-person. Proper hygiene and safe food handling are key to preventing food-borne illnesses such as salmonella.

Salmonella is found in domestic and wild animals, including poultry, wild birds, swine, cattle, and rodents. Pets such as iguanas, tortoises, turtles, chicks, dogs and cats may harbour the bacteria. Humans are carriers of certain types of salmonella.

Outbreaks have been caused by inadequately cooked poultry and poultry products, uncooked or lightly cooked foods containing egg and egg products, raw milk and dairy products including dried milk. Foods have been contaminated with feces from infected food handlers. Salmonella infections have been caused by foods such as meat and poultry products processed or prepared with contaminated utensils or on contaminated work surfaces. Salmonella outbreaks have also been linked to raw fruits and vegetables (including sprouts) and unpasteurized dairy products, like raw milk and raw milk cheeses.

Contaminated non-chlorinated water supplies can also cause salmonella infections. Fecal-oral transmission may be the cause when diarrhea is present in infants.

How Can You Prevent Salmonellosis?

- Thoroughly wash hands before, during and after food preparation.
- Do not prepare food, care for hospitalized patients, the elderly or children if you have diarrhea.
- Cook ground poultry and poultry pieces to a minimum temperature of 74°C (165°F). Whole poultry must be cooked to 85°C (180°F). Cook other ground meats to 71°C (160°F). Use a probe thermometer to verify cooking temperatures.
- Place cooked foods on clean surfaces to prevent recontamination.
- Do not leave food at room temperature for longer than two hours.
- Use only pasteurized milk and milk products.
- Do not consume raw eggs or inadequately cooked eggs (over easy, or sunny side up).
- Do not use raw unpasteurized eggs in egg-nogs and homemade ice cream.
- Do not use an egg if it appears that the shell has been broken or damaged before you handle it.