



Prevent • Promote • Protect

Public Health Fact Sheet

Salmonella

What is Salmonella?

- Salmonella is a germ that causes infection of the intestines.

What are the symptoms of Salmonella infection?

- Most people infected with Salmonella develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps about 12 to 72 hours after exposure. The illness usually lasts four to seven days.
- Infants and people with weakened immune systems can develop complications such as infection of the blood or bone.

How is Salmonella spread?

- People can get Salmonella infection from eating contaminated foods. Foods contaminated with Salmonella are often of animal origin, such as beef, poultry, milk or eggs. Outbreaks have been linked to many other foods including fresh vegetables, tomatoes, and peanut butter. Thorough cooking kills Salmonella in food.
- Food also may become contaminated by the hands of food handlers who are infected with Salmonella and did not wash their hands thoroughly after using the bathroom.
- People with Salmonella infection can spread the illness to others if they do not wash their hands thoroughly or if someone else is helping to care for their diarrhea illness.
- Salmonella also may be found in the stool of some pets, including dogs and cats. Reptiles, such as turtles, lizards, and snakes, are particularly likely to harbor Salmonella. Chicks and young birds can also carry Salmonella in their stool. People can get Salmonella from handling these animals and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth before washing their hands thoroughly. People also can get Salmonella after caring for an infant or child who is infected.

What should I do if I think I have Salmonella infection?

- Consult your doctor or health care provider.
- Do not prepare food for others while you have diarrhea and for at least 48 hours after your diarrhea resolves.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after using the bathroom.
- Avoid contact with infants or people with a weakened immune system until your diarrhea has resolved.

How is Salmonella infection diagnosed?

- Many different illnesses can cause diarrhea or abdominal cramps. Laboratory testing of stool is necessary to diagnose Salmonella infection.

How is Salmonella infection treated?

- People with Salmonella infection usually get better on their own. People with severe diarrhea need to drink extra fluids to avoid dehydration. Antibiotics are not usually necessary to treat Salmonella.

How do you prevent Salmonella infection?

- Cook poultry, meat, and eggs thoroughly. Do not eat or drink foods containing raw eggs or raw (unpasteurized) milk.
- Wash hands, kitchen work surfaces, cutting boards and utensils with soap and water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry.
- Be particularly careful when handling foods prepared for infants, the elderly, and individuals with weakened immune systems.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap after handling reptiles, birds, or baby chicks, and after contact with pet stool. Infants and people with weakened immune systems should avoid contact with these animals or their cages.

More information on Salmonella: www.cdc.gov/salmonella/

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