

SALMONELLOSIS

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an intestinal infection caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. These bacteria are the most common cause of food poisoning. While most people recover from salmonellosis without treatment, others, including infants, the elderly and people who are immunocompromised, may require hospitalization.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

Typical symptoms include:

- Sudden onset of diarrhea, which may be bloody
- Abdominal pain
- Fever
- Headache
- Nausea
- Vomiting

Symptoms usually appear within 12 to 36 hours after ingesting the bacteria but may develop up to 72 hours afterwards. The illness can last from several days to several weeks. Dehydration from diarrhea may occur and is more severe in high-risk individuals such as the young, the elderly and those who are immunocompromised.

Some individuals who are infected with the bacteria may not get sick or show symptoms, but they can carry the bacteria and spread the infection to others.

How does salmonellosis spread?

Salmonella infection usually occurs when people eat food contaminated with the bacteria. *Salmonella* bacteria are commonly found in the intestines of livestock, fowl, cats, dogs, rodents, reptiles, amphibians and other animals. Raw meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs and unpasteurized milk may carry *Salmonella*. If these foods are not properly cooked, the bacteria can survive and cause illness when the foods are eaten. Infection can also spread through contaminated water sources.

Salmonella bacteria can also be passed from person to person through feces on unwashed hands.

Animals, birds, reptiles and some pets may carry *Salmonella* bacteria without showing symptoms. People can pick up *Salmonella* bacteria during contact with animals and their feces.

How is salmonellosis treated?

Most people with salmonellosis will recover in four to seven days without treatment. People with severe diarrhea may require rehydration, possibly with intravenous fluids. Antibiotics are not typically required but may be prescribed for people with weaker immune systems such as young infants, the elderly, those with chronic

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medical conditions, HIV-positive individuals, or persons in whom the infection has spread beyond the intestines.

How can salmonellosis be prevented?

- Practice thorough handwashing, especially:
 - After using the washroom
 - After changing diapers
 - Before preparing food
 - After handling pets, livestock, reptiles
- Clean and sanitize counter tops and utensils after contact with raw meats and poultry, especially before using these areas to prepare ready-to-eat foods
- Avoid cross-contamination of food. Keep uncooked meats separate from produce, cooked foods and ready to eat foods
- Cook meat, poultry and egg products thoroughly. Use a probe thermometer to be sure foods are cooked to a safe temperature. Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm
- Avoid using raw eggs, as in homemade eggnogs, salad dressing, ice cream and desserts. Never use dirty or cracked eggs
- Cook stuffing separately from the bird (poultry)
- Keep cold foods at 4°C or lower and hot foods at 60°C or higher
- Avoid raw or unpasteurized milk or other dairy products. Never let children sample raw milk directly from the animal
- Drink water from a safe supply. If you are unsure of the water supply, drink bottled water or boil the water to a rolling boil for one minute or treat the water supply. Remember that ice cubes made from contaminated water may also carry the bacteria. Have well water tested to make sure it is safe to drink.
- If ill with diarrhea, avoid preparing or handling food

Note: Immunocompromised persons or small infants should avoid contact with pets and reptiles and consuming any raw sprouts.

People with symptoms who work in or attend high risk environments, such as food handlers, those who provide patient care or those who attend or work in childcare, should stay at home until symptom-free for 24 hours.