

# Salmonellosis

## What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a bacterial infection that generally affects the intestinal tract and occasionally the bloodstream. It is one of the more common causes of gastroenteritis with several thousand cases occurring in New York state each year. Most cases occur in the summer months and are seen as single cases, clusters or outbreaks.

## Who gets salmonellosis?

Any person can get salmonellosis, but it is recognized more often in infants and children.

## How are salmonella bacteria spread?

Salmonella are spread by eating or drinking contaminated food or water or by contact with infected people or animals.

## What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

People exposed to the salmonella may experience mild or severe diarrhea, fever and occasionally vomiting. Bloodstream infections can be quite serious, particularly in the very young or elderly.

## How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The symptoms generally appear one to three days after exposure.

## Where are salmonella found?

Salmonella are widely distributed in our food chain and environment. The organisms often contaminate raw meats, eggs, unpasteurized milk and cheese products. Other sources of exposure may include contact with infected pet turtles, pet chicks, dogs and cats.

## For how long can an infected person carry the salmonella germ?

The carrier stage varies from several days to many months. Infants and people who have been treated with oral antibiotics tend to carry the germ longer than others.

## Do infected people need to be isolated or excluded from work or school?

Since salmonella are in the feces, only people with active diarrhea who are unable to control their bowel habits (infants, young children, certain handicapped individuals, for example) should be isolated. Most infected people may return to work or school when their stools become formed, provided that they carefully wash their hands after toilet visits. Food handlers, health care workers and children in daycare must obtain the approval of the local or state health department before returning to their routine activities.

## What is the treatment for salmonellosis?

Most people with salmonellosis will recover on their own or require fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics and antidiarrhea drugs are generally not recommended for typical cases with intestinal infections.

## How can salmonellosis be prevented?

- Always treat raw poultry, beef and pork as if they are contaminated and handle accordingly:
  - Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping on other foods.
  - Refrigerate foods promptly; minimize holding at room temperature.
  - Cutting boards and counters used for preparation should be washed immediately after use to prevent cross contamination with other foods.
  - Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats.
  - Ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature is reached - particularly when using a microwave.
- Avoid eating raw eggs or undercooking foods containing raw eggs.
- Avoid using raw milk.
- Encourage careful hand washing before and after food preparation.
- Make sure children, particularly those who handle pets, attend to hand washing.
- Do not keep reptiles as pets in homes with immunocompromised persons or young children.

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Taken from New York State Department of Health Communicable Disease Fact Sheets.