



Salmonella

What is Salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an infection with a bacteria called Salmonella.

- Most people infected with Salmonella develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after ingesting the bacteria directly or indirectly.
- The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days and most individuals recover without treatment.
- Some people may experience severe illness that requires hospitalization. In these patients, the Salmonella infection may spread from the intestines to the blood stream, and then to other body sites and can cause death unless the person is treated promptly with antibiotics.
- The elderly, infants, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness and should be carefully watched.

How long is someone infectious with Salmonella?

Salmonella is shed in the stool (poop) while the person is ill and perhaps for a week or two after symptoms end. Because a person may continue to shed Salmonella in the stool after feeling better, it is important to continue good hand hygiene practices for several weeks after recovering. Antibiotic use has been shown to sometimes prolong the shedding period. The carrier state (where a person is well, but still infected) develops in less than 5% of individuals infected with Salmonella.

How is a Salmonella infection diagnosed?

Many different kinds of illnesses can cause diarrhea, fever, or abdominal cramps. Determining that Salmonella is the cause of the illness depends on laboratory tests that identify Salmonella in the stools of an infected person. Approximately 40,000 cases of Salmonella are reported per year in the US.

How is a Salmonella infection treated?

Salmonella infections usually resolve in 4-7 days and often do not require treatment unless the patient becomes severely dehydrated or the infection spreads from the intestines. Patients should see their physician if they experience blood in the stool. Individuals with severe diarrhea may require rehydration, often with intravenous fluids. Antibiotics are not usually necessary.



How is Salmonella spread?

Salmonella live in the intestinal tracts of humans and other animals, including birds. Salmonella are usually transmitted to humans by eating foods contaminated with animal or human feces.

- Contaminated foods usually look and smell normal.
- Contaminated foods are often of animal origin, such as meats, milk, or eggs, but any food may become contaminated.
- Many raw foods of animal origin are frequently contaminated, but fortunately thorough cooking (especially poultry and eggs) kills Salmonella.
- Food may also become contaminated by an infected food handler who does not properly wash his or her hands with soap after using the bathroom.



Are there long term consequences from a Salmonella infection?

Persons with diarrhea usually recover completely, although it may be several months before their bowel habits are entirely normal. A small number of persons who are infected with Salmonella will go on to develop joint pain, irritation of the eyes, and painful urination. This is called Reiter's syndrome and may last for months or years.

Can I get Salmonella from my pets?

Yes. Salmonella may be found in the feces of some pets, especially those with diarrhea. People can become infected if they do not wash their hands after contact with the feces of an infected pet. Reptiles such as turtles, snakes, and lizards are particularly likely to harbor Salmonella and people should always wash their hands immediately after handling a reptile, even if the reptile is healthy. Adults should also be careful that children wash their hands after handling a reptile. Reptiles are not appropriate pets for small children and should not be in the same house as an infant.

How can Salmonella be prevented?

- Do not eat raw or undercooked eggs, poultry or meat. Poultry and meat, including hamburgers, should be well-cooked and not pink in the middle.
 - Do not consume raw or unpasteurized milk or dairy products.
 - Produce should be thoroughly washed before consuming.
 - Uncooked meats should be kept separate from produce, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash hands, cutting boards, counters, knives, and other utensils thoroughly after handling uncooked foods. Wash hands before handling any food and between handling different food items.
- People who have salmonellosis should not prepare food for others until they are no longer infected with Salmonella.
- Wash hands after contact with animal feces. Reptiles are particularly likely to have Salmonella. Wash hands immediately after handling reptiles.