

SALMONELLOSIS FACT SHEET

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an infection with *Salmonella*, a type of bacteria that live in the intestines of some animals. The bacteria are shed in the feces and can cause diarrheal illness in people.

How common is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is one of the most common gastrointestinal infections reported in the U.S., with approximately 4500 reported cases in California every year. There may be many more unreported cases in people who did not seek medical care or did not submit fecal specimens for testing. Young children are the most likely to get salmonellosis. Salmonellosis is more common in summer than in winter.

How do people get salmonellosis?

People usually get salmonellosis by eating raw or undercooked foods contaminated with animal feces. These foods often are of animal origin, such as beef, poultry, milk, or eggs, but any food, including fruits and vegetables, may become contaminated. These foods usually look and smell normal. Food may also become contaminated by the hands of an infected person who did not properly wash their hands after using the bathroom.

People can also get salmonellosis from direct or indirect contact with some pets. Reptiles, such as turtles, lizards, and snakes, are especially likely to carry *Salmonella*. Many chicks and young birds carry *Salmonella* in their feces. Animals may appear healthy, but can still shed *Salmonella*. People can become infected if they do not wash their hands after contact with pets, pet feces, or pet environments.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

Most persons infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection. Most persons recover within 4 to 7 days without treatment. Some persons, especially the elderly, infants, and those with weakened immune systems, may develop complications that require hospitalization. In these people, the *Salmonella* infection may spread beyond the intestines to the blood stream and other body sites. In rare cases, *Salmonella* infection can cause long-lasting symptoms such as joint pain, eye irritation, and painful urination.

How is salmonellosis diagnosed?

Your health care provider can order a test of your feces for *Salmonella*. *Salmonella* may also be found in other patient samples such as urine or blood but that is less common.

How is salmonellosis treated?

Most people with intestinal *Salmonella* infections will get better within a week and usually do not require treatment other than drinking plenty of fluids. Persons with severe

diarrhea and dehydration may be given intravenous fluids. Treatment with antibiotics is not generally needed unless the infection is severe and has spread from the intestines.

What can a person do to prevent salmonellosis?

Proper cooking

- Do not eat undercooked meat. Check that meat has been cooked thoroughly with a food thermometer.
- Do not eat or drink foods containing raw (unpasteurized) milk or raw eggs.

Safe food handling and storage

- Prevent cross contamination in food preparation areas by thoroughly washing your hands, utensils, and food preparation surfaces often, and immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat.
- Keep raw foods separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Do not prepare food for others if you have diarrhea.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water before eating, even if they will be peeled.

Hand washing

Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, rubbing hands together vigorously:

- Before preparing or eating food.
- After using the toilet.
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet.
- Before and after tending to someone who is ill with diarrhea.

Animal contact

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after:
 - handling reptiles (such as turtles, lizards, and snakes) and live poultry (such as birds, chicks, and ducklings), and after touching their environment.
 - having contact with animals or their environments at petting zoos, farms, and fairs.
- Adults should watch children wash their hands after contact with animals or their environment.

What is public health doing about salmonellosis?

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and local health departments (LHDs) monitor salmonellosis in California because it is a disease that can be easily spread to other people. CDPH and LHDs monitor for outbreaks and investigate them to identify a common source and take measures to prevent ongoing infections.

Health care providers are required to report cases of salmonellosis to the LHD. In addition, LHDs may restrict the activities of persons with salmonellosis from certain

work or activities (such as food handling, health care, or day care) until they have been examined and cleared by their LHD.

Where can I get more information on salmonellosis?

- Your health care provider
- Your local health department
- California Department of Public Health website at:
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Salmonellosis.aspx>
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/Salmonella/>

Updated July 2015