

# Salmonellosis

## What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a food borne infection caused by *Salmonella* bacteria.

Symptoms include sudden stomach pain, diarrhea, fever, nausea and vomiting. Dehydration may be severe, especially among at risk groups like the elderly, infants, and those with a weakened immune system. Children are most likely to get the infection.

Symptoms usually occur within 6 to 72 hours and last 4 to 7 days.

## How is salmonellosis spread?

The disease is spread through the “fecal-oral” route. Bacteria are shed in the feces of infected people or animals and can infect other people through poor sanitation or hygiene.

You can become ill if you eat or drink contaminated food or beverages, or if you come into contact with infected animals or contaminated environments.

*Salmonella* can be found in a wide variety of foods, such as raw or undercooked poultry and meat, unpasteurized dairy products and raw or undercooked eggs. It can also be found in fruits and vegetables contaminated with *Salmonella* bacteria.

Cooked, ready-to-eat food can be contaminated when using the same cutting board, plate or utensil to prepare other contaminated food items, such as raw meat. Always wash and sanitize cutting boards, plates, utensils and other surfaces immediately **before** putting cooked or ready-to-eat foods on them. Always wash or sanitize them **after** putting raw meat and poultry on them.

## How do I prevent salmonellosis?

- Always wash your hands after you use the bathroom or change a diaper
- Some domestic animals and pets, such as chicks, ducklings, hamsters, gerbils, turtles, snakes and iguanas, can carry *Salmonella* bacteria. Wash your hands well after handling these animals or pets and help young children wash their hands. The same applies for visiting petting zoos
- Do not prepare food if you have *Salmonella* or another infection that causes diarrhea
- Wash your hands before, during and after preparing food
- Thoroughly cook all foods that come from animal sources, particularly poultry, egg products and meat dishes
- Cook meats and poultry to an internal temperature of at least 74°C (165°F). Use a meat thermometer to make sure the meat is cooked to the proper temperature. If turkey or chicken is cooked with stuffing in it, make sure that both the meat and the stuffing are well cooked to an internal temperature of at least 74°C (165°F)
- Thaw frozen foods fully before cooking, unless the food is marked “Cook from frozen”. Always thaw foods in the bottom shelf of a refrigerator with meat and poultry placed on a tray to catch any drips. You can also thaw frozen foods under cold running water, or in the microwave. These methods can thaw food at uneven rates, so take extra care to ensure the whole product is thoroughly thawed
- Use only pasteurized milk and milk products
- Keep eggs refrigerated and do not use dirty or cracked eggs

- Keep cooked and ready-to-eat foods separate from raw foods. Ensure all surfaces and utensils are washed and sanitized before they come into contact with ready-to-eat foods
- Do not let raw or cooked foods sit for a long time at room temperature
- Be aware that eating the following foods will increase your risk of *Salmonella* infection: raw or under-cooked eggs or products containing raw eggs such as eggnogs, uncooked dough, some desserts, some sauces or homemade ice cream. To reduce your risk of *Salmonella* infection use liquid whole pasteurized egg products for these and other foods that are not cooked thoroughly
- Be aware that eating raw or undercooked sprouts can put you at risk of *Salmonella* infection. If cooked properly, these are not a risk
- Educate food handlers and persons who prepare food about the importance of the following food safety practices:
  - Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold
  - Wash hands before, during and after food preparation
  - Keep a clean kitchen
  - Protect prepared foods from cross contamination

## How is salmonellosis treated?

If you have been infected, you may be asked to answer detailed questions and to submit a fecal or stool sample (bowel movement).

Your health care provider may prescribe antibiotics if you have a severe case of salmonellosis, another chronic illness or a weak immune system.

## For more information

For more information see the following HealthLinkBC Files:

- [HealthLinkBC File #59a Food safety: Easy ways to make food safer](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #61b Petting zoo and open farm visits](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #85 Hand washing: Help stop the spread of germs](#)

For information on the use of antibiotics, visit Do Bugs Need Drugs <https://dobugsneeddrugs.org/>.



**BC Centre for Disease Control**  
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

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