

Salmonellosis



What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an infectious disease caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. Most persons infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most persons recover without treatment. However, in some persons, the diarrhea may be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized. 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.

How common is *Salmonella*?

Every year, approximately 42,000 cases of salmonellosis are reported in the United States. Because many milder cases are not diagnosed or reported, the actual number of infections is estimated at more than 1.2 million cases annually. In 2011, San Bernardino County had an incidence rate of **8.7 cases per 100,000 people**. There are many different kinds of *Salmonella* bacteria, with serotypes Typhimurium and Enteritidis being the most common in the United States. Salmonellosis is more common in the summer than winter.

How do people get infected with this germ?

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 feces. Contaminated foods usually look and smell normal. Contaminated foods are often of animal origin, such as beef, poultry, milk, or

eggs, but any food, including vegetables, may become contaminated. Thorough cooking kills *Salmonella*. Food may become contaminated by the hands of an infected food handler who did not wash hands with soap after using the bathroom.

Salmonella may also be found in the feces of some pets, especially those with diarrhea, and people can become infected if they do not wash their hands after contact with pets or pet feces. Reptiles, such as turtles, lizards, and snakes, are particularly likely to harbor *Salmonella*. Many chicks and young birds carry *Salmonella* in their feces.

What can be done to prevent *Salmonella* infection?

Simple food handling and hygiene practices

can help prevent *Salmonella* infections. Follow these easy tips to avoid becoming ill, or making guests or customers sick:

- Cook all meat, poultry and eggs thoroughly. Make sure that the meat is cooked throughout (no longer pink) and any juices run clear. All poultry should be cooked to reach a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F.
- Do not eat foods containing raw eggs.
- If you are served undercooked meat, poultry, or eggs in a restaurant, send it back for further cooking.
- Wash your hands with soap before preparing food.
- Wash your hands with soap after handling raw foods of animal origin and before touching anything else.
- Prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen by using separate cutting boards for foods of animal origin and other foods and by carefully cleaning all cutting boards, countertops, and utensils with soap and hot water after preparing raw food of animal origin.
- People should always wash their hands immediately after handling a reptile or bird, even if the animal is healthy. Adults should also assure that children wash their hands after handling a reptile or bird, or after touching its environment.

Wash your hands with soap after contact

How is the 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 stool of an infected person. Once *Salmonella* has been identified, further testing can determine its specific type.

How can salmonellosis be treated?

Salmonella infections usually resolve in 5-7 days and often do not require treatment other than oral fluids. Persons with severe diarrhea may require rehydration with IV fluids. Antibiotics (such as ampicillin or ciprofloxacin) are not usually necessary unless the infection spreads from the intestines. Some *Salmonella* bacteria have become resistant to antibiotics, largely as a result of the use of antibiotics to promote the growth of food animals.

Are there long-term consequences?

A small number of people with *Salmonella* develop pain in their joints, irritation of the eyes, and painful urination. This is called reactive arthritis. It can last for months or years, and can lead to chronic arthritis which is difficult to treat. Antibiotic treatment does not make a difference in whether or not the person develops arthritis.

For more information, please contact:
County of San Bernardino
Department of Public Health
Communicable Disease Section
dph.sbcounty.gov/programs/cds-2-2
(800) 722-4794

To report a possible foodborne illness, contact:
County of San Bernardino
Department of Public Health
Division of Environmental Health Services
(800) 442-2283

Source: this information was taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website www.cdc.gov.